





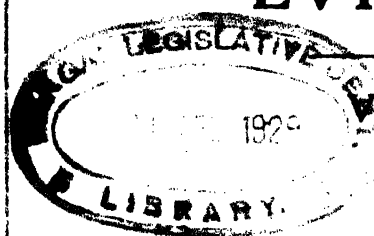




# INDIAN CINEMATOGRAPH COMMITTEE

1927—1928

## EVIDENCE



Volume II

Oral Evidence  
of

Witnesses examined at Lahore, Peshawar, Lucknow and  
Calcutta, with their Written Statements.



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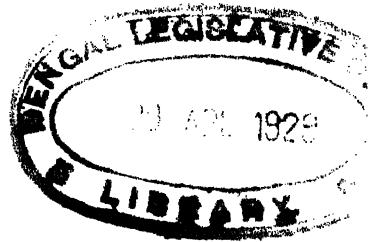
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# INDIAN CINEMATOGRAPH COMMITTEE.

## QUESTIONNAIRE.

### INSTRUCTIONS.

*If you are willing to answer any of the questions kindly send your reply as soon as possible to the Secretary, Indian Cinematograph Committee, whose address will be c/o Presidency Postmaster, Bombay (up to 18th November); and thereafter c/o Postmaster, General Post Office, Lahore (up to 30th November); and thereafter c/o Home Department, Delhi.*

### INTRODUCTORY.

1. Have you any special knowledge of, or connection with the Cinematograph Industry either in India or abroad? If so, what?

### GENERAL.

2. (a) In your experience to what extent do Indians (1) of the educated classes and (2) of the illiterate classes frequent Cinemas? To what extent is such attendance on the increase? (Please explain to what place or area your answer refers.)

(b) Can you give an idea of the composition of an average Cinema audience in the locality of which you can speak?

(c) What proportion of the audience consists of children under 11 or adolescents of impressionable age?

### PART I.

#### *Film Industry in India.*

3. Have you any opinion as to what classes of films are the most popular with Indian audiences and generally in India?

4. Are the exhibitors catering adequately for Indian audiences? If not, what are the reasons?

5. Are Indian-produced films, depicting Indian life, readily available to exhibitors? If so,

(a) are they of good quality?

(b) are they popular?

(c) is it ordinarily less or more profitable to show an Indian than a Western film? Can you cite any examples of successful Indian films?

6. (a) Do you think that films of Indian life, topical Indian news and scenes (with Indian actors) depicting stories from the national literature, history and mythology would be more popular with Indian audiences than the prevalent Western films?

(b) Of such films, what kind would appeal most strongly

(1) to the educated classes?

(2) to the illiterate population?

7. Is difficulty experienced in obtaining suitable films for exhibition to the British and Indian Troops? If so, in what way exactly are the films unsuitable? What sort of films are both suitable and popular?

8. (a) Are you satisfied with the present condition of the Industry in this country in its several branches of production, distribution and exhibition?

(b) If you are not satisfied, what in your opinion are the main difficulties besetting the Industry and what means would you suggest for assisting it?

9. Are good films readily obtainable by exhibitors at reasonable prices?

If not, is there any special reason for this?

Is there any monopoly or tendency to monopoly of the supply or exhibition of films?

10. Do the systems of "block" and "blind" booking and of "first run" or "key theatres" exist in India?

If so, explain the advantages and disadvantages thereof to the Trade and the Public.

11. Have the exhibitors in this country sufficient facilities for previewing films?

Have you any suggestions to make on this matter?

12. To what extent is the Amusement Tax (where it exists) a handicap to the exhibitor?

13. How does the present Customs Tariff on imported films affect the exhibitors? How far is it useful for promoting the indigenous production of films? What suggestions have you to make regarding the Tariff generally on all materials connected with the Film Industry?

14. Do you consider that an increased use of the Cinema for educational purposes in schools and for adult education in Agriculture, Public Health, etc., by Government or other agencies would help the growth of the film industry in this country?

Is there any demand for such films?

15. Are conditions in this country favourable to development of an Indian film-producing industry on a large scale?

What are the reasons for your opinion?

16. Do you consider that there are Indian producers, directors, actors, actresses and scenario-writers of sufficient technical knowledge, enterprise, resource and adaptability on whom the country can depend for a substantial output of films of real competitive exhibition value?

What measures would you suggest to supply any deficiency?

17. Do you consider that sufficient capital in India is or will be forthcoming for film-production?

18. Do you consider that suitable Government action whether legislative or administrative may be an effective incentive and encouragement to private enterprise for film production? Can you suggest what suitable action can be taken by Government?

19. How does the cost of film-production in this country compare with that in other countries?

20. (a) Do any of your proposals involve expenditure from Government funds? If so, do you think that such expenditure is justifiable, having regard to the other needs of the country?

(b) Have you any suggestions to make regarding the sources from which such expenditure may be met?

21. What is your opinion regarding a proposal which has been made that to ensure the production and exhibition of films conforming to moral standards, to provide a centralised neutral distributing agency and furnish a fair market, and to inaugurate the use of teaching and propaganda films, and generally to improve the conditions of the Film Industry in all its aspects, including censorship, a State agency should be created to undertake the management of the Film Industry as a monopoly?

#### *Films of the British Commonwealth.*

22. Should India participate in the policy outlined in the resolution of the Imperial Conference to give some measure of encouragement to British Empire films, and if so, would such participation

(a) assist the development of her own film industry,

(b) assist in making herself better known and understood throughout the Empire and the world, and

(c) improve the standard of Western films shown in India?

Have you any suggestions as to the methods of putting such a policy into practice and the limitations, if any?

23. (a) To what extent can cinema pictures be used for making known the conditions, resources and habits of the peoples, and the activities of the various Governments of the British Commonwealth of Nations to each other?

(b) What measures would you suggest for getting the various Governments to co-operate to this end?

## PART II.

### *Social Aspects and Control.*

24. (a) Do you consider that any class of films exhibited in this country has a demoralising or otherwise injurious effect upon the public?

(b) Is there a general circulation of immoral or criminally suggestive films?

(c) In your opinion what class of film is harmful? To whom is it harmful? In what way is it harmful?

(d) Consider specifically whether censorship is adequate in the cases of

(1) "Sex" films,

(2) "Crime" films.

(e) Do you consider there has been any increase of crime in your Province due to the Cinema?

(f) Support your statements wherever possible by instances within your personal knowledge.

25. Do you consider that the differences in social customs and outlook between the West and the East necessitate special consideration in the censorship of films in this country?

26. (a) Should more care be taken in censoring films likely to offend religious susceptibilities?

(b) Can you give an example of any film which has offended the religious susceptibilities of any class of the community?

27. (a) Have any of the films exhibited in India a tendency to misrepresent Western civilization or to lower it in the eyes of Indians? Is it a fact that films representing Western life are generally unintelligible to an uneducated Indian or are largely misunderstood by him? If so, do undesirable results follow from this? Have you any suggestions to make on this point?

(b) Do you know of any films exhibited abroad which have a tendency to misrepresent Indian civilisation? If so, were they produced in India?

28. Has any class of film shown in this country a bad effect on—

(a) children?

(b) adolescents?

If so—

(1) what class of film?

(2) in what way is it harmful?

29. Are you in favour of certification of certain films as "For Adults Only"?

30. Are you in favour of prohibiting all children below a certain age from visiting Cinemas except for special "Children's Performances"? If so, why? What age do you suggest?

31. (a) Do you consider that censorship is an effective method of guarding against misuse of the film?

32. Do you think that the present system of Censorship in your Province is satisfactory? If not, in what way is it defective? Can you suggest any improvement?

**33. Would a strict Censorship—**

- (a) interfere unreasonably with the recreations of the people?
- (b) involve a falling off in the attendance at Cinemas?
- (c) unduly interfere with the freedom required for artistic and inspirational development?

**34. (a) Do you advocate the replacement of the present Provincial Boards of Censors by a single Central Board?**

- (1) If so, why?
- (2) Would this cause any inconvenience to the Trade?
- (3) How should such a Central Board be constituted?
- (4) Where should it be situated?

**(b) Or, would you advocate a Central Board in addition to the Provincial Boards?**

**(c) If you advocate a Central Board working either alone or with Provincial Boards, how would you regulate the relationship between the various Boards and the Central and Local Governments?**

**(d) How should such a Board or Boards be financed?**

**35. (a) Is the present constitution of the Provincial Boards (of which at least half the Members must, under the law, be non-officials) satisfactory?**

**(b) Would you prefer a whole-time experienced well-paid officer as Censor at each centre, to be assisted by an Advisory Board of non-officials?**

**36. (a) Do you think that the present system (prevailing at Bombay and Calcutta) under which films are ordinarily examined by inspectors subordinate to the Board is satisfactory? Are such inspectors sufficiently well qualified for the work? What sort of qualifications are essential?**

**(b) Or do you think that all films should be examined by Members of the Board? If so, do you consider that gentlemen of suitable standing will be available who would be prepared to devote sufficient time to the examination of films for a reasonable remuneration?**

**37. (a) Are there adequate safeguards under the Act for preventing the exhibition of a film which may be objectionable locally although it has been passed by a Board in some other part of India?**

**(b) Do you consider that any safeguards are needed?**

**38. Do you know any instances of films which have been passed by a Board of Censors in one Province and found objectionable in another Province?**

**39. Have you come across any instances of pictures disapproved or banned from exhibition in the country of origin or in Great Britain being exhibited in India?**

**40. Should posters, handbills and advertisements of Cinema performances also be censored? What measures would you suggest for such censorship without undue restriction on freedom?**

**Have you noticed any such advertisements which were objectionable? In what way were they objectionable?**

**41. Have you noticed any improvement in the moral standard of the films exhibited in India in recent years?**

**42. Have you any suggestions to make for getting the co-operation of the trade in the matter of the Censorship?**

**43. (a) Is there need for a stricter control over the import and export of films?**

**(b) If so, why?**

**(c) What methods should be adopted for this purpose?**

**44. To what extent could public bodies and the Press assist in maintaining a good standard of films?**

**45. (a) Should some control be exercised by Government over film-production, and if so, what should be the nature of such control?**

**(b) Should all film-producing agencies be registered and licensed, and their studios periodically inspected?**

**NOTE.**

**In the case of those whose names are marked with an asterisk the record of oral evidence was not corrected by the witness.**





## LAHORE.

### **\*Oral Evidence of the Punjab Board of Film Censors, on Thursday, the 24th November 1927.**

The following Members of the Board were present:—

- (1) Mr. J. E. Parkinson, M.A., Principal, Central Training College,
- (2) Miss M. Bose,
- (3) Mrs. Shah Nawaz,
- (4) Mr. H. W. Webb,
- (5) Khan Bahadur Nawab Muzaffar Khan, Director of the Information Bureau, and Secretary of the Board.

*Chairman:* Are you all here?

A. No, not all. The Commissioner is in camp, and Mr. Yusuf Ali and Diwan Bahadur Raja Narendra Nath are not coming.

Q. We are very glad to meet you, ladies and gentlemen. I see this board was only newly started last September. How many meetings have you had?

A. Only one meeting. And that was only a preliminary one. We had to settle and discuss preliminaries.

Q. Can you tell us what led to this change?

*Khan Bahadur Nawab Muzaffar Khan:* We don't know, Sir, except that we got a letter from the Government asking us to serve.

Q. We are told it is more in connection with the two producing studios here that this board has been appointed. Have you censored any of the films produced in this place?

A. I, as Secretary, have seen two films. The members have seen one film of the local production.

Q. They were both produced in Lahore?

A. Yes.

Q. There are studios here?

A. There is a studio here. There is another studio which we have not seen.

Q. Who runs the studio which you have seen?

A. Mr. Shorey.

Q. Is he coming before us?

A. I don't know. I could send for him if you want him.

Q. What is the name of Mr. Shorey's studio?

A. The Punjab Film Company.

Q. When was that studio started, do you know?

A. I think Mr. Shorey first started this work about 2 years ago.

Q. And they have produced only one film so far?

A. No, Sir. I think they have produced about 7 or 8 films.

Q. You censored only one?

A. I censored only one because we have only just begun.

Q. Before that where were they censored?

A. They were more or less departmental films so they were not censored. I beg your pardon, there was one film produced by Mr. Shorey, which the Deputy Commissioner of Lahore saw a year after. He was not a regular censor but I think I advised Mr. Shorey that it would be better if the Deputy Commissioner saw that film.

Q. I suppose you are interested in the cinema? You go to the cinema, although your board was only recently started.

*Miss Bose:* I certainly don't go to the cinema unless it is something very special.

Q. None of you have interested yourself in the subject so as to be able to tell us whether there is a possibility for the industry in this province?—What are the potentialities?

*Mrs. Shah Nawaz:* I think there is a possibility. There is a growing need which has been felt by most of the educated people that they should have films which would tell them of their historical events.

Q. You think the Indian public want them?

A. I think they do.

*Mr. Parkinson:* Can I give my experience. I have one of these cinema kodaks and I amuse myself in a way by going to various schools and colleges and filming them and other educational activities and I have always found my men extraordinarily interested in seeing these and the schools and other persons concerned have frequently asked me whether I would take my cinema and show them. And the men see it again and again and again. And that is the only experience I have had.

Q. Not only the students but the general public?

A. I am speaking purely of students. But they always come in crowds if you show films like that. And they offer to buy my films. And judging from that, there is a great demand for suitable cinema films here.

Q. I mean Indian scenes and Indian traditions?

A. They are all Indian films. Different educational activities that go on here and round about.

Q. That is what we found in Bombay too, that people preferred Indian films to western films.

*Mrs. Shah Nawaz:* Stories like the Mahabharat should appeal to the public very much.

Q. Of course in this province history requires very careful handling?

A. Oh yes.

Q. Modern history would perhaps have to be avoided?

A. It will have to be for the present.

*Khan Bahadur Nawab Muzaffar Khan:* With the present communal tension.

Q. If you want Indian history more modern than A. D. 1,000 it would be difficult to handle the subject.

*Mr. Parkinson:* I don't know whether it will interest you. But I have also a full size cinema. Of course, obviously I cannot take films myself, but I find extraordinary difficulty in getting suitable films to show. I have got the cinema but cannot get the film.

*Mr. Green:* You mean you have got the projector?

A. Yes, and the generator. But I have not been able to get the films.

*Chairman:* You think at any rate, so far as instructional films are concerned—whether it be propaganda, public health, modern methods of agriculture, or general subjects for the education and instruction of the people, and topical . . . . .

*Mrs. Shah Nawaz:* It is one of the best means of propaganda.

Q. Now what is your considered opinion on the point? You think the Government should undertake the production of such films or do you think it is left to private agency, they would be able to do it.

*Mr. Parkinson:* Personally, I would not give an opinion on that because I have not come to any conclusion.

*Mrs. Shah Nawaz:* But Government should give monopolies to certain companies.

*Chairman:* I should like you to think over it. Because it won't pay the private agencies to produce such educational films.

*Mr. Green:* You have just told us you could not get the films.

*Chairman:* It won't be an attractive proposition commercially to them, although they may be induced to exhibit a certain length along with their programme. But this is more the function of Government than of a private agency, isn't it?

*Mrs. Shah Nawaz:* We have to think of it carefully, because money is needed in this country for so many things.

*Q.* Quite true, but this is a question of the instruction of the people.

*Mrs. Shah Nawaz:* Yes. In connection with health propaganda and also morals we could have films made with the funds at our disposal.

*Q.* But apart from this, you think that it is essential that it should be undertaken?

*A.* Oh yes.

*Q.* Of course if private agencies are forthcoming, so much the better. Do you think private agencies will be forthcoming in any reasonably short time in this province?

*Khan Bahadur Nawab Mazaffar Khan:* We have got already two agencies and I think there should be no difficulty about that. And as far as Government departments are concerned, they are given work either by one or the other of the departments.

*Q.* What else do they do?

*A.* That is what I tell them: you should not depend entirely on Government work and the best thing would be for you to produce your own productions. In the Punjab, for instance, leaving aside the historical side of the question, if you could take up love stories, I think these would be very welcome if they are properly done. Some of these stories would give the best of scenery in Gujarat and other districts, river scenes and things of that sort, and these are stories that are appreciated not only by the educated people but even among the villagers. That is the most important part. As Mr. Shorey told me, it was only on account of want of funds and lack of good actors that he was not able to do anything.

*Q.* Everywhere that is the complaint. There is no training.

*A.* If we could get good trained actors I think this department should certainly overshadow foreign films but only if they are properly trained.

*Q.* So if Indian films could be properly produced it would create a taste for Indian films much more than for western films, to which people now go because they cannot get Indian films?

*A.* Of course, ordinary Indian films would not be of much interest, but if we produce these films that I spoke about, I mean go to any cottage or palace you hear the name of . . . . If properly done, I think these would appeal to the masses in the Punjab.

*Q.* What I am anxious to know is whether there is any possibility of films being produced in any reasonable quantity by private agencies.

*A.* None. I think it would be difficult. Capital is shy and people have not got so much confidence in these people. If there is a sort of Government help coupled with private enterprise we could do a lot.

*Mr. Parkinson:* Perhaps it would be advisable to find out what Government is doing in this connection.

*Q.* We have got some information about that. There are two aspects of the question. Other countries have produced educational films, take for instance Germany and America, then such of them as are suitable for this country might be imported and you may keep a film library.

*A.* Perhaps the films produced in England or America would not be suitable for this country. For example, I was looking at some the other day that I could get for the college. They concern themselves with agricultural modern devices. Well, I am afraid that would make no appeal

whatever to the Indian peasant. I don't think India is quite ready for that yet.

*Q.* But still I think it could be introduced into the minds of the peasants. That is one of the subjects on which I am very keen.

*A.* But would you go quite so far? There would be no demand for it. No private company would take it on. But if the Government subsidises a particular private company by buying so many films or giving a subsidy simply for this school for propaganda, I think good work would be done.

*Mr. Coatsman:* When you say "Government" you mean the provincial Government?

*A.* Yes, and that is what the provincial Government is doing now.

*Chairman:* There is one other aspect of the question. There are various provincial Governments and most of the public health and other films would be used throughout the country. Instead of each Government going in for its expenditure in this connection, would it not be better if they pool their resources together and have a common studio or central laboratory where both production and distribution can take place? Would it not be better, cheaper and more economical?

*A.* It should be more economical but I doubt whether it would be quite so satisfactory.

*Q.* I mean, there would be an advisory board for each province to advise what is required for each province.

*A.* But isn't the provincial committee competent to do that?

*Q.* That is what we are anxious to find out; whether the provinces are prepared to pay the funds needed for a studio and distributing agency like that.

*Khan Bahadur Nawab Muzaffar Khan:* As far as I am aware, Sir, the Punjab Government is anxious on that point and so far as propaganda in different departments is concerned, we have been getting films prepared by one company.

*Q.* They have no studios themselves?

*A.* I think probably the Director of Agriculture will be able to tell you. I hear that they are starting that work, at Lyallpur.

*Q.* Well, at any rate, they realise the importance of the education of the masses by means of the film?

*A.* They realise that.

*Mr. Parkinson:* In fact, so much so that we have our own motor lorry. We have the train. And I think the idea is to extend this further when we find whether it is successful or not.

*Q.* I am glad to hear that. Now, I think as other officers of the Government are coming, who will be more interested, I do not propose to trouble you further on that point. I wanted to have your view. You consider such methods of instruction to be up-to-date and most essential?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Now, of course, as parents and as citizens, you are interested in the proper use of the film. Are you satisfied now with the existing films that are shown? I mean with the effect produced on the people? Are they productive of good?

*Mr. Parkinson:* Frankly, I say no.

*Miss. Bose:* So do I.

*Mr. Parkinson:* I raised the question with members of my staff who are in a better position to judge than I am and without exception they told me that the usual films shown—I mean the American drama film,—is decidedly harmful. Their reason was that the majority of the audience regard the scenes shown in the cinema as being typical of western civilisation, that the people were not sufficiently educated to understand the spirit in which the film is produced.

**Q.** That is the objection. Any other objection?

**A.** That was the only objection.

*Miss Bose:* The ladies are very much against the scenes shown. I asked them their opinion and they all cried it down. When I spoke to them about educational films they all said, "Oh, yes, we like them, but we do not like the standard pictures that are shown to our children and we do not allow them to go."

**Q.** But surely the cinema is an amusement, people go there for amusement, and if you are going to make it merely an educational factor, people . . . . .

*Miss Bose:* They are certainly conservative ladies. They say it becomes a very exciting thing for the children, and if they go to such things over and over again nothing will keep them away from them, and my pandit told me that they go so far as to steal money from their parents.

**Q.** People are going in large numbers?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Both men and women?

**A.** Many women go too now.

**Q.** So that I mean it is a relaxation to them. They go there after a hard day's work for relaxation.

**A.** Some of the pictures are not at all good for boys and girls. The pictures of western life they see—they think it is all very bad and it brings the western people down in their estimation. It is very sad that they should have a very poor idea of England and America.

*Mr. Parkinson:* Relaxation? It is an excitement among the student community.

**Q.** Supposing you do not show those pictures which you have in mind, do you think that the cinema will attract adults?

**A.** Possibly not.

**Q.** Either you will have to close down the cinema or censor the film in the way in which you want to . . . .

**A.** Or try to develop a better type of picture.

**Q.** You do not mind my putting a few questions? Is the Indian mind satisfied with what it sees in actual life among the Europeans? Do you think they understand it, say, your short skirts, and other things?

**A.** Probably not. But you do not find a man kissing in the street.

**Q.** Probably you have a passing kiss.

**A.** It is not a passing kiss on the screen.

**Q.** What is the remedy? Is not education the proper remedy? Do you think that shutting the eyes of people and keeping them in the dark will help? Is it the proper remedy for that?

**A.** I think so, for the present.

**Q.** How long will you do that?

**A.** Until education has created a better public opinion. It is a matter of education.

**Q.** Don't you think the more they come to know it, the more will they give it a stage value and not consider it real? Do you think they really care to think about what they have seen when they have gone home? Do you think they really keep it in mind?

*Miss. Bose:* They do.

*Mr. Webb:* The younger generation do that.

**Q.** The younger generation whether of the east or of the west is the same. You do not make any difference between western young and eastern young?

*Mr. Parkinson:* Except that the western youths understand the background of these dramatic films more than the eastern.

*Q.* So that it is not a question of the so-called uneducated classes but of the youth?

*A.* And the knowledge behind.

*Mrs. Shah Nawaz:* If it is a question of the youth why not show them the other side and let them see what they will see later on life?

*Miss Bose:* Why should you bring these things into prominence?

*Q.* So long as you have the west with you, how can you hide it? Supposing young people go to England would you prevent them from going to the pictures?

*Miss Bose:* They are not illiterate people nor do they belong to the masses.

*Q.* Is it the young or the illiterate you have in mind?

*Miss Bose:* Both.

*Q.* It is a very difficult problem for us. On the one side you will kill the industry if you do not make it attractive, and on the other hand you have this possibility of injury to the public. The only thing you mentioned, Mr. Parkinson, was the possibility of the westerner being misjudged. You did not say it has any demoralising effect. I asked you whether there was any other reason mentioned and you told me no. There is no question of demoralisation of the Indian public?

*Mr. Parkinson:* I certainly think if you are showing vice and passionate scenes it should have a demoralising effect.

*Q.* Then it has a demoralising effect also?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* So that that is another ground on which you object?

*A.* It is the same thing, it is only another aspect.

*Q.* It is not the same thing.

*A.* I regard the impression he gets about our civilisation as demoralising for the Indian mind.

*Q.* Simply because you think that the westerner leads a fast life, how does it demoralise you?

*A.* Vices constantly shown to you make an impression on you.

*Mr. Green:* Is it a question of an eastern film or a western film? Would not an eastern film just as well have a demoralising effect?

*A.* It could. We do not see them.

*Chairman:* Can you give us any instances in your experience where youths have been led astray by going to the cinema?

*Miss Bose:* From crime scenes.

*Q.* I will come to that. I am now on the demoralising effect on the youth.

*Mrs. Shah Nawaz:* There is demoralising effect as well as moralising if I may say so.

*Miss Bose:* It all depends upon the film.

*Q.* You have not seen the films yourself?

*Miss Bose:* I have not.

*Q.* You are not in a position to tell us about it?

*Miss Bose:* No.

*Q.* Can any of you give us any instance of a film which you think is objectionable in that way?

*Mr. Parkinson:* I can give you one instance where a cinema film has led to wrong doing, a bicycle was stolen . . . .

*Khan Bahadur Nawab Muzaffar Khan:* That was where an accused said he got it from the cinema. It was criminally suggestive.

*Q.* What we are after is this, whether the effect of the cinema is such as to call for any drastic action on the part of Government?

*Mr. Parkinson:* I should say not to my knowledge.

*Q.* These generalisations are made and when you come to particulars you always find it difficult. Can you, for instance, tell us of any film which you have seen, which you thought was objectionable and ought not to have been passed?

*A.* In "The Sheik" I object to the Sheik carrying the woman away bodily.

*Mrs. Shah Nawaz:* Some scenes in "Ki-Ki" were very objectionable about the slums of Paris.

*Q.* We have the information from the police both in Bombay and here that so far as crime is concerned they cannot say there is any development of crime in consequence of the cinema. You alluded to the case of a boy stealing a bicycle.

*Mr. Parkinson:* Yes.

*Q.* How do you connect it with the cinema?

*A.* He said he learnt the method of stealing the bicycle from the cinema.

*Mr. Green:* Is that a very common plea in other countries and in this country on the part of the accused in the hope of extenuating the punishment?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* How long ago was that?

*A.* I cannot tell you.

*Chairman:* Would you rather have an injury to the trade or have what you consider educative, instructive and moralising films shown?

*A.* There is only one answer to that. I am sorry for the trade, but, as I say, it would not break the trade.

*Q.* I suppose a little more careful censorship is all that you want?

*All:* Yes.

*Q.* That is what you are aiming at, not that the injury is so great as to call for any drastic action. Do I understand you aright?

*Mrs. Shah Nawaz:* There is a great need of good films.

*Q.* The real remedy is the production of good films?

*Mrs. Shah Nawaz:* In order to educate the public mind.

*Miss Bose:* Indian films would appeal more to them because they will understand them better.

*Q.* The remedy lies in better production and a little more care in censorship?

*Miss Bose:* Yes.

*Q.* We are all human and human censorship boards are likely to err.

*Mr. Webb:* More sporting films ought to be produced.

*Mr. Green:* Are you referring to films produced in India or generally?

*Mrs. Shah Nawaz:* We are talking generally of films.

*Mr. Webb:* Produced in India. For instance, if you have pictures of race meetings, steeplechases, polo tournaments, hockey tournaments and the like, I think they will be very attractive and they do no harm. As a matter of fact, the northern India men are very good sportsmen and they take in large numbers to these races, polo tournaments and so on.

*Chairman:* Supposing we were to produce Indian films either by direct effort or by indirect effort of the kind you have in mind, would you make it obligatory on each cinema to show a certain proportion of Indian films?

*Mr. Parkinson:* I would.

*Q.* You know that they sometimes complain that their usual clientele would drop in numbers if they showed Indian films.

*Mrs. Shah Nawaz:* If they showed a good deal.



**Q.** But if a little portion of each show consisted of Indian films it would be an encouragement to the industry?

**Mr. Webb:** A film showing the best polo champion would attract tremendously. If the film is not very long and if you have short lengths it will help a great deal.

**Q.** Short lengths can be introduced. You have no objection to making it compulsory on each cinema to show a certain length of Indian films provided it is not too long?

**Mr. Webb:** No.

**Colonel Crawford:** I should like to deal with you in your capacity of censors. You have stated that you consider a little closer censorship is necessary. Can you give me any particular idea of the nature of your objections, what the censor has got to do and what portion he has to cut out and so on?

**Mr. Parkinson:** We have exactly that difficulty amongst us. There was one film that was produced here on co-operation and usury and the injurious effects of usury. The money-lender was a Hindu and one of the gentlemen strongly objected to that being shown as it would arouse ill-feeling between the Hindus and the Mussalmans. I see no point in that at all. I pass it, but a colleague of mine would not.

**Q.** Is there any point on which you think you are generally agreed?

**A.** We are all generally agreed on what are called passionate love scenes and the like.

**Q.** I take it you will agree that close-up scenes of kissing might well be curtailed?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** That is one definite point on which you are agreed?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** What about scenes of debauchery which occasionally come in?

**A.** Those I would cut out a great deal.

**Chairman:** Have you seen any scenes of debauchery on a film?

**A.** I have a distinct recollection of one or two, but I cannot remember what portion was cut off.

**Q.** If there were scenes of debauchery I am sure the Censorship Board would have censored them themselves.

**A.** I will cut out all scenes where naked women are shown.

**Q.** Even if it is a work of art?

**A.** Yes.

**Miss Bose:** No.

**Colonel Crawford:** Have you seen any such films?

**Mr. Parkinson:** Generally speaking, I should cut out all passionate love scenes and scenes of debauchery. There was a film named "Orphans of the Storm" which had very objectionable scenes.

**Q.** Is it being publicly exhibited?

**A.** It was stopped.

**Q.** The film was censored at Bombay?

**Inspector:** Yes.

**Mr. Coatman:** It has been entirely banned?

**Inspector:** Yes, in the Punjab.

**Q.** From your point of view it might still be cut a little further?

**Mr. Parkinson:** Not so much from the point of view of the Board but from the point of view, in my opinion, of the value given to mob rule.

**Mrs. Shah Nawaz:** But that is in many other films and worse things too. I really see no reason why this film should not be passed.

*Khan Bahadur Nawab Muzaffar Khan:* We have not yet decided it. It is still pending before the Board.

*Colonel Crawford:* Have you seen any Indian films shown in the Punjab yet?

*Mr. Parkinson:* Not one.

*Q.* Has any member of the Board seen an Indian film?

*Khan Bahadur Nawab Muzaffar Khan:* The Punjab prepared films I have seen.

*Q.* They are mostly of an educational character?

*A.* Yes.

*Mrs. Shah Nawaz:* I have seen "The Light of Asia".

*Q.* You have seen none of the films which are now produced in Bombay?

*Khan Bahadur Nawab Muzaffar Khan:* No. I saw one in Bombay two years ago prepared, probably, by the Municipal Committee showing the effects of early marriage and so on.

*Mrs. Shah Nawaz:* I think "The Light of Asia" was produced in Bombay.

*Mr. Green:* It was not purely an Indian film; it was prepared with foreign co-operation.

*Mr. Neogy:* The actors and actresses were all Indians.

*Colonel Crawford:* Have you any suggestions to make regarding captions? Do you think that the western serials will be understood better if you have captions in Urdu as well as English?

*A.* That would make films very long because in the Punjab Urdu is not the only language. We have got Hindi, Gurmukhi and so on.

*Q.* We have seen four different languages on the screen. They are all shown at the same time.

*Mrs. Shah Nawaz:* If they are shown at the same time it won't make the film long.

*Q.* You have seen a certain number of Indian produced films in the Punjab?

*Inspector:* Yes.

*Q.* Can you give us any idea of their popularity with the audiences?

*A.* Yes. Sometimes there is trouble. Lately there was a film called "Nur Jehan". It was shown in one theatre on McLeod Road, and when it was taken to the city they objected to it. We had to stop it because it would cause trouble between the two communities.

*Chairman:* You mean the audience objected to it?

*A.* One caste says it is objectionable and the other caste says it is not and thus it causes a lot of friction between the two communities.

*Mr. Webb:* About "Nur Jehan," I asked some Muhammadans who told me that the objection entertained was not justified. I think sometimes it is probably due to jealousy between one firm and another.

*Mr. Neogy:* Have you seen that film?

*Mrs. Shah Nawaz:* No.

*Colonel Crawford:* The object of your Board is to censor local productions. You do not worry very much about western films?

*Khan Bahadur Nawab Muzaffar Khan:* That is the main object, but still we are keeping in touch with all the shows. We have not taken any action so far, but we intend taking action regarding western films also.

*Q.* You will accept a certificate of the Board of Censors either in Bombay or Calcutta?

*A.* Yes, unless we think that there is a great deal of objection to it.

*Q.* How is your Board financed?

*A.* We have been given only Rs. 500 for the expenditure, but I think to start with it is quite sufficient.

**Q.** Do you consider, so far as the western films are concerned, it is necessary to have your own board in the province?

**A.** I think it is, because, after all, India is a big continent and films which may be liked in Bombay or in Calcutta may not be liked in the Punjab.

**Q.** Have you known of very many cases of films having to be stopped in the Punjab?

**A.** One film that we stopped—we did not stop it, but the Deputy Commissioner and the Punjab Government stopped it—was "Orphans of the Storm," and if we go a little further into the North-West Frontier Province it is likely to create more misunderstandings. We do not interfere in every film, but only whenever we find a certain film is likely to have a bad effect.

**Q.** My impression at the moment is that very few of the films which pass through the Bengal or Bombay Board of Censors are objected to, it is a very, very small proportion.

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** And I would like to know your views whether you would not get greater uniformity by censoring the whole of the western films at one place?

**A.** If all the provinces are represented on that Board.

**Q.** Is there any particular necessity for each province to be represented on that Board in view of the fact that you are already accepting the censorship of Bombay or Bengal and there is at present only occasional objection to such films?

**A.** Some of these western scenes I would not like my Pathan neighbours to see because they would give a very low impression.

**Q.** Does the North-West Frontier Province come under your censorship?

**A.** No. My district is just on the border.

**Q.** What is your objection to showing these films to them?

**A.** It gives a very wrong impression and they are not very much educated.

**Mr. Noyce:** What is the exact nature of the harm you fear?

**A.** It will produce a wrong impression.

**Q.** To whom will it be harmful?

**A.** I do not think it is in the interests of Government either.

**Q.** The objection is on political grounds?

**A.** You might call it political.

**Colonel Crawford:** I would take you as regards the question of censoring western films. If each province is going to have its own board and judge each of these films, the boards might set up, and possibly will set up, a different standard for each province. Then what is going to be the position of the unfortunate man who imports these western films?

**A.** If each province or a group of one or two provinces is represented there then it will be all right.

**Q.** You do not think the sort of Board which you get, for example, in a city like Bombay, is sufficient?

**A.** It is not sufficient. There is a great deal of difference.

**Q.** You already have a safeguard in that your district magistrate can suspend a film under the existing Act, and will that not be sufficient?

**A.** If that continues it is all right.

**Q.** Then a Central Board with that safeguard will probably be adequate so far as western films are concerned?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Do you need your board for censoring your local production?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** I notice here there are only 28 cinema theatres in the whole of the Punjab, 9 are in Lahore and 5 in Rawalpindi, and I presume the majority of the cinemas are in cantonments. Are there very many that are definitely catering for Indian audiences?

**Inspector:** There is one in the cantonment here and the others are in the civil area.

**Q.** Is an Indian film in the dress of another province likely to be appreciated here or should it be dressed in the dress of the province to be appreciated?

**Khan Bahadur Nawab Muzaffar Khan:** Personally I think a Punjabi would prefer a film that is produced in the Punjabi dress.

**Mrs. Shah Nawaz:** But it is human nature to desire a change sometime and see the things that others do. For instance, will not Bengalis like to see some local things of the Punjab just as we would like to see the things of Bengal? That would be a very good way also of making one province know what other provinces are like.

**Mr. Green:** Col. Crawford has asked most of the questions I wanted to put. But as one who has been an *ex-officio* member of the Board of Censors in Bombay for some time I am interested to know whether this Board has yet formed any general principles laying down what they consider objectionable and what they do not. I take it the Board is getting its experience at present.

**A.** Yes.

**Mr. Parkinson:** We have hardly begun to function yet. We have been in exercise a very short time and we have only had one meeting to find out what our powers are.

**Mrs. Shah Nawaz:** The general impression in the country is that obscene scenes and scenes which lead to the breaking of the public peace should not be shown.

**Q.** Even "obscene" is very hard to define?

**Mrs. Shah Nawaz:** It of course depends on one's point of view. It is very difficult for a Board to agree upon the point.

**Q.** The Board as a whole does not see films unless the officer who inspects them is doubtful of their propriety.

**Khan Bahadur Nawab Muzaffar Khan:** That is so.

**Q.** Who actually inspects the films?

**A.** The Inspector of Police. He is a paid official. He has been doing that work for some time in Lahore.

**Q.** Is he a wholetime servant of the Board?

**A.** He has nothing to do with the Board. He is employed by the Deputy Commissioner and the Superintendent of Police. He was on that duty before and we requested the Deputy Commissioner, as we have not got sufficient funds, to let the arrangement continue for the present.

**Q.** At present you don't pay for that officer?

**A.** For the present we don't pay.

**Q.** As Secretary do you receive any remuneration?

**A.** No.

**Q.** And none of the Board receives any remuneration?

**A.** No.

**Q.** You hope to build up a fund out of the fees you will charge?

**A.** I don't think there will be much income from that.

**Q.** Has the Board realised the difficulty that I think all censors have felt, that if you cut out everything, either from a Western or an Eastern film, to which someone might take objection there will be practically nothing left?

**Ladies:** Oh yes.

**Q.** I take it that is a difficulty you have felt and you are still trying to find a solution?

**A.** Yes.

**Mr. Neogy:** I find from the rules under the Cinematograph Act under which your Board has been constituted, that the Secretary is required to examine every film. How is it you delegate that authority to the Inspector?

**Khan Bahadur Nawab Muzaffar Khan:** That is as regards locally produced films, it is the Secretary who examines the film. Probably I have not made it clear. As regards foreign films he keeps in touch with the various cinemas here and if he finds anything objectionable he brings it to the notice of the Deputy Commissioner and the Board. He has not done it so far but that is the procedure.

**Q.** Under the new arrangements will he be under the orders of the Board?

**A.** We have not decided that yet. We approached the Police Officer if he would kindly let us have his services but we have not heard so far.

**Q.** If a Western film is offered to you for censorship, there is nothing under the rules to prevent that? The rules require you to examine it?

**A.** Under section 4 of the Cinematograph Act we could take action.

**Q.** That is not my point. Say an importer of a Western film, instead of taking it to Bombay or Calcutta for censorship, brings it to you. Then under the rules wouldn't you personally have to examine it?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Therefore, if by any chance your standard was considered to be less stringent than that of other Boards, you would be flooded with films—wouldn't you?

**A.** Generally we have adopted the standard of the other Boards.

**Q.** That does illustrate the necessity of a consistent standard throughout India?

**A.** Yes. As far as I can remember the Government has asked us to keep that standard in view, the standard that is employed in Bombay itself.

**Q.** You have got a copy of the instructions to Inspectors which have been issued by the Boards of Censors in Bombay and in Bengal?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** And you are going to be guided by that?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** I find from the rules of your Board that there is nothing here that distinguishes between a Western film and a Punjab produced film, so far as your functions are concerned?

**A.** The rules read with the Act make it clear.

**Q.** So you don't think there is any necessity for the adoption of a different standard in the Punjab?

**A.** As I have already said, it is generally not required but there may be a very few cases.

**Q.** Now, coming to the question of instructional films I take it that your view is that Government should not undertake the manufacture of these films themselves but get it done through some private agency.

**Mr. Parkinson:** Yes, I am against that.

**Mrs. Shah Nawaz:** We say Government will have to undertake the production of films on agriculture, co-operative societies and so forth.

**Q.** It is not necessary even in their case for the Government actually to have its own studio. Government can entrust the work to a private agency and give them definite instructions. That I take it is your view?

**Mr. Parkinson:** Yes.

**Q.** Now, you tried this in a few instances?

*Khan Bahadur Nawab Muzaffar Khan:* Yes. Mr. Shorey has done a lot of work for us.

*Q.* Has his work given satisfaction?

*A.* As far as my own work is concerned, Mr. Shorey's photographic work is very satisfactory. Other portions of the work I do not think he is so good at. He has no idea of arranging the film properly. If the Government departments have the time, the best thing for them will be to arrange the sequence and the arrangement of the film in such a way as to appeal to audiences.

*Q.* So, in your view, the combination of a more efficient Government system with private agency would produce ideal results?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Now with regard to instructional and propaganda films on public health matters for instance, do you think that different Provincial Governments can have different problems and different ideas about them?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* So it will not be possible always to standardise those ideas for any central organisation which might undertake the work for the whole of India. That would not be perhaps feasible from your point of view?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Now you said that capital is shy. Don't you think that if Government were to entrust their work to private agency, that in itself would offer an inducement to private capital to flow in?

*A.* It might to a certain extent; it will increase the confidence of people.

*Q.* From that point of view would you recommend such a system as distinguished from a Government owned and Government run studio?

*A.* Yes, from that point of view.

*Chairman:* If there are several private agencies will you call for tenders?

*A.* Then I think we will choose the best.

*Mr. Neogy:* You complained about the unsatisfactory character of the actors and actresses that were available in the Punjab. We were assured by a high American authority in Bombay who knows a good deal about the subject, that it is the Punjab which can be looked to for supplying the best material so far as what is described as the screen value of the human face goes. He has been all over India and is of opinion that it is the Punjab which could supply the best type of physical features?

*A.* I am a Punjabi myself, so it is not for me to say!

*Q.* You are not aware of your own special advantages?

*A.* Yes.

*Mr. Coatsman:* Your Board has been constituted a very short time?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Well, in your private capacity then, do you notice any difference in the moral quality, shall we say, of the films that are now being produced as compared with those produced a few years ago?

*A.* I see so few. I am not competent to pass an opinion.

*Q.* What made me ask was that Mrs. Shah Nawaz referred to a particular film.

*Mrs. Shah Nawaz:* No. "Royal Divorces" was a very good film.

*Q.* You said you had certain objections.

*A.* No, I was thinking about "The Merry Widow" and other modern American films.

*Q.* I just want to know if anybody here has any ideas on this particular subject?

*Miss Bose:* You mean, are they better or worse?

*Q.* Yes.

*Mrs. Shah Nawaz:* We think they are a little worse, some of these modern American films.

*Mr. Webb:* What is the object of having a Censor Board if they are improving?

*Q.* What I am wanting to get at is this: do you think the censorship ought to be tightened?

*Mr. Webb:* I think it ought to be.

*Q.* You think that modern conditions make it necessary for the censorship to be more on the alert than ever before?

*A.* Yes, I think so.

*Q.* What about posters? It seems to me that the poster of a film is often objectionable where the film is not, the idea being to persuade the public that something objectionable or indecent is going to be shown.

*Miss Bose:* I can speak about posters. I have not been to the cinema but I have seen some objectionable posters. Yesterday a friend was telling me she saw such a bad poster she went to the Deputy Commissioner. He said he had seen it too and was going to stop the film from being shown.

*Q.* You think the posters ought to be censored too?

*Both ladies:* They ought to be.

*Police Inspector:* I may say from my knowledge in the last year or two there has been only one case where the Deputy Commissioner has objected to a poster. I have it on the file here if you care to see it.

(The poster in question was shown round to the members of the Committee.)

*Q.* But have any of you noticed posters to which you have objected?

*Many members:* No, we have not.

## Written Statement of Khan Bahadur Nawab MUZAFFAR KHAN, Director of the Information Bureau, Punjab.

### INTRODUCTORY.

1. No.

2. (a) My answer refers to Lahore town only. Educated Indians, particularly the college students, frequent the cinemas to a large extent. The illiterate classes also visit cinemas to a considerable extent. The attendance is on the increase daily. Only a few years ago there were only two cinemas in Lahore, but the number has now risen to 6. I have noticed the villagers of the suburbs of Lahore visiting the cinemas, and whenever films of a good actor of the type of Charlie Chaplin, Douglas Fairbanks, Rudolph Valentino, Buster Keaton, etc., are being exhibited there is so great a rush on the booking offices that it becomes almost impossible to obtain a seat unless it is previously reserved.

(b) The composition of an average cinema audience is generally as follows:—

	Per cent.
1. Europeans and Eurasians with a sprinkling of English soldiers	20
2. Students	40
3. Literate Indians (excluding students)	20
4. Illiterate Classes	20

(c) Children under 14 also visit the cinemas but not very much. They generally accompany their parents, and it is in very rare cases that they are allowed to visit the cinemas by themselves.

3. I am of opinion that films with passionate love themes are most popular with Indian audiences. Films exhibiting dare-devils, adventurous exploits, hair-breadth escapes and comical scenes come next in order of popularity.

4. The films generally exhibited in the cinemas have created the bad taste mentioned above. So far as that taste goes, the exhibitors are catering adequately.

5. No. We have very few Indian-produced films shown in the cinemas.

(a) Generally not.

(b) No.

(c) A foreign produced film because of its superior technique, acting, etc., is sure to attract larger audiences and consequently yield more profit. There are only one or two Indian films which to my knowledge acquired considerable popularity. The films were entitled Krishna Lila and Krishna Sudhana.

6. Indian produced films on Indian subjects comprising national literature, history and mythology, provided they are absolutely free from communal tinge, are sure to be more popular than the films imported from abroad. The foreign films in a majority of cases have very little educational value. They are full of stunts and thrills which do not suit the mentality of the Indian public. Indian films, on the other hand, if proper care is taken in their production are sure to be more in accord with the sentiments and the traditions of the people. Films based on the romantic love stories such as Hir Ranjha, Sassi Punnu, Sohni Mahiwal, Yusuf Zuhakha, etc., are sure to win a market for themselves here. In the portrayal of historical characters it would, however, be impossible to steer clear of the communal canker.

(b) (1) and (2) Films of the type suggested above will appeal to the literate and illiterate alike.

8. (a) No.

(b) Want of good actors, absence of proper organisation and capital.

14. Yes. The demand for such films is growing though very slowly. The Rural Community Board financed by the Punjab Government recently started a travelling cinema which has been giving exhibitions in some of the districts of the Province. The following films which it has been exhibiting have been prepared under the direction of Director of Information Bureau:—

#### *Local production.*

1. The Land of the Five Rivers.
2. The Criminal Tribes.
3. The Opening ceremony of the Ferozepore Canals.
4. His Excellency Lord Irwin's Visit to Lahore.
5. Opening ceremony of the Sulimanke Headworks.
6. Boy Scout Rally.

#### *Foreign production.*

7. The Smallpox film.
8. The Fly.

Reports from the centres where exhibitions have been held show that the films exhibited attracted large crowds from rural areas and were also welcomed by school children.

15. No. The Punjab is an agricultural Province with a few big towns, and hence the market for films is strictly limited. I don't think it will be possible here to produce films on an industrial scale.

16. Indians do not show a marked aptitude for acquiring film technique. Generally speaking, Indian produced films have very little competitive value. Foreign films beat them every time. The question of organising the film industry in this country is not so easy as it looks. It would be interesting to refer to the problem of a 'national film industry' in Great Britain. There the



question was long debated in the Press, but in spite of all that was tried in this behalf, the American films continued to hold their own. The advantage of an early start goes a long way in the case of a specialised industry of this type. The demand for films in this country is not likely to assume very large proportions for some time to come. Films cannot, therefore, be produced on an economic basis.

17. The 'shyness' of the Indian capital is a notorious fact and many a better cause has not been able to break the spell, what to say of the film industry.

18. Government action, legislative or otherwise, cannot be of much avail. It is hardly conceivable that the Government will subsidise the film industry whilst causes with better and superior claims await their attention.

20. (a) Yes. But I don't think any expenditure of Government funds is justifiable.

(b) Does not arise.

21. I do not think that a central producing agency of the State would be successful. Educational and propaganda films are very good so long as free exhibitions are given, but I do not think that they can be made a paying concern. A central censoring agency can do much in the way of improving the moral standard if all the provinces are adequately represented on it. It is very often the case that a film passed by other Boards of Censors in this country is criticised in the Punjab.

22. I deem it desirable that India should participate.

(a) and (b) Reciprocity in the exchange of films will enable her the better to understand and be understood by the other communities that constitute the British Empire. Moreover, the example of the dominions will stimulate interest in the film industry here.

(c) Very likely.

23. (a) To a very large extent. The interchange of films is likely to give greater insight of India and her people to other parts of the British Commonwealth.

(b) The question of the form that the film co-operation between different parts of the Commonwealth is to take can be very safely determined at the Imperial Conference.

24. (a) I think most of the American films shown in this country have an injurious effect on morals. Strictly speaking, we cannot call these films immoral, but scanty dress gives Indians an indifferent idea of English morality since they are not generally acquainted with the Western mode of living.

(b) I am not aware of any immoral or criminally suggestive films having been shown in the Punjab.

(c) The class of films mentioned at (a) above both to the rulers and ruled. The Indian spectators acquire wrong notions about the morality of the Western people, and begin to imagine that the standard of morality prevailing amongst them is much lower than theirs. The scenes of profligate splendour usually exhibited cannot but exercise a pernicious effect on the audiences.

(d) Censorship is not adequate.

(e) I think not.

25. Yes. It is not only the difference of social customs and outlook between the East and West which may require special consideration in censoring films, but also the difference between Bombay, Bengal and Madras on the one side and the Punjab and the North-West Frontier Province on the other which occasionally requires recensorship.

27. (a) It is generally alleged that they do, but I am not in a position to verify the statement. To the uneducated Indian the films are generally unintelligible and therefore are misunderstood by him because he does not consider the exhibition as an amusement but as an incentive to immorality. I am not aware of any undesirable results following from this. Strict censorship will meet the case.

(b) I learn from England-returned friends that a film entitled " Picturesque India " depicting the worst features of Indian life such as criminal tribes, Gonds, Bhills, Sadhus, etc., was exhibited in London. I am not sure whether it was produced in India, but from the contents it appears that it was prepared in India.

28. With the exception of educational films all kinds of films are injurious for children and adolescents. They are harmful inasmuch as they are responsible for precocity in matters pertaining to sex relationship.

29. Yes.

30. Yes, 14 years.

31. Yes.

32. Yes. The system of censorship in the Province has only recently been created and it is not possible to suggest any changes at present.

33. (a) No.

(b) It may perhaps involve a falling off in the attendance at cinemas.

(c) Not materially.

34. (a) No. Each Provincial Board knows well the needs and tastes of its own Province.

(1)---(4) Does not arise.

(b) No.

(c) and (d) Does not arise.

35. (a) and (b) Yes.

37. (a) No. We generally come to know of a film being objectionable after it has been publicly exhibited.

(b) The exhibitors should, I think, be required by the law to forward to the Board and, in the case of mufassil districts, to the Deputy Commissioner the synopsis of the films at least 3 days before their exhibition. The synopsis will give some idea, and action could be taken on the least suspicion.

39. No.

40. I do not think it is necessary.

41---42. No.

44. Not very much. The more the criticism the larger the audience.

45. (a) The film industry in this province has not reached the stage where it is necessary to exercise such control.

(b) Yes.

### **Oral Evidence of Khan Bahadur Nawab MUZAFFAR KHAN, Director of the Information Bureau, Punjab, on Thursday, the 24th November 1927.**

(Chairman : You are the Director of Public Information?

A. Yes.

Q. How long have you held that office?

A. For about 3 years now.

Q. Can you tell us whether there has been any complaint in the press about the nature of the films shown in the Punjab?

A. I think only in one or two cases. " Nur Jehan " was one film.

Q. Was it a local production?

A. No, I think it was an Indian production but it came here from outside.

Q. That was a complaint in the vernacular press? That is the only thing you remember?

A. Yes.

**Q.** Has there been any complaint so far as Western films are concerned in the local press?

**A.** No.

**Q.** I mean, before this Committee was appointed?

**A.** No. I don't think so.

**Q.** You say there are only 4 or 6 cinemas in Lahore.

**A.** There may be more.

**Q.** I thought you had 9 cinemas.

**A.** Yes. I think so.

**Q.** Are you familiar with the mofussil?

**A.** Not very much.

**Q.** You can't tell us where cinemas are to be found in the province?

**A.** No.

**Q.** There is one sentence in your answer to which I should like to refer. We were told with reference to Indian audiences that they do not like passionate love themes; but you make the statement that they are popular with Indian audiences.

**A.** I mean those sort of films are popular, passionate love scenes.

**Q.** Do you mean with young college students or with the illiterate public.

**A.** Both with the illiterate public and college students.

**Q.** Do you often go to the cinemas yourself?

**A.** Not very often.

**Q.** Then how do you make your statement.

**A.** That is my general impression.

**Q.** I do not understand what you mean by 'general impression'.

**A.** I might have visited the cinema about a dozen times in the course of one year, and the impression was gained from those visits.

**Q.** I see you say the films generally exhibited in cinemas have created the bad taste mentioned above.

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** You have seen very few Indian films?

**A.** Very few.

**Q.** You think that the proper remedy for removing the effects of that bad taste will be to produce good Indian films?

**A.** Yes, if we are able to produce really good Indian films based on those old love stories we have in the Punjab.

**Q.** You still want love stories?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Because a cinema will not be attractive without a love story; unless there is a woman in it, it ceases to be attractive?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** You cannot avoid it?

**A.** We cannot avoid it, but still we do not want those very passionate love scenes.

**Q.** You think there is a great demand for educational films?

**A.** I said the demand is growing steadily. I won't say there is a very great demand because my own experience of the cinema lorry I have sent out for the last six months or so is, I think, not a good test, because in the villages life is so dull that people will come to anything.

**Q.** Can you tell me how many towns there are with a population of about 10,000?

**A.** No.

**Q.** Nor can you tell us in how many towns there are cinema shows?

A. I could let you know but not offhand.

Q. I wish you would let me know how many towns in the Punjab have cinemas and how many in each.

A. Very well.

Q. You believe in an early start being given to any industry, so that it may not be too late?

A. Yes.

Q. So if anything is to be done for developing the indigenous film industry you think we ought to take advantage of the opportunity now afforded?

A. Yes.

Q. What was the advantage you contemplated? I want your considered opinion on the point. What I mean is, if you had a Government studio all the departments can co-operate in producing the films which they need. They will have one expert to rely upon, camera man, director, etc. I mean, the Government can do it better than any private agency?

A. Certainly that would be a cheaper and better arrangement.

Q. From the point of view which you have in mind of educating the people?

A. Yes.

Q. What is the advantage then in subsidising a private agency as you suggested?

A. I am giving my personal opinion. My own idea is that if a certain firm is encouraged and if we give Government work to them they will be in a better position then, and they will be able to produce some other films too.

Mr. Neogy : It would be good for the industry?

A. Yes.

Q. And not very bad for the Government?

A. No.

Chairman : Which is the main object—educating the public?

A. The main object is educating the public.

Q. Which method will be more effective from that point of view?

A. A Government studio will be better and cheaper.

Q. And more effective?

A. And more effective.

Mr. Neogy : Then when you say Government studio, you mean a provincial studio run by the provincial Government?

A. If you can have a central studio so much the better.

Chairman : Private agencies may be many. You will have to choose from them. One year you may choose one and next year another. You would always choose the lower tender. On the other hand, if you subsidise private agencies, if there is more than one, there will be jealousy, and the work may not be better done. Another advantage of the Government studio is that experts from the Government studio will be lent out to other studios run by private agency. At present private studios cannot afford to import expensive experts of their own unless they co-operate, whereas the Government studio could import the camera man, director, etc. whose services could be availed of by others for their own purposes just as the Agricultural Advisor is used by the agriculturists. In the same way these Government experts might be lent to them for producing their own films.

A. Yes, if they have the time.

Q. So what is your opinion in the matter, that Government should run a studio or should subsidise a private agency?

A. I think, considering it from a purely educational point of view, it would be better if Government were to run the studio themselves.

Q. You see, as you say, the capital is very shy, the Indian—he does not venture upon the industry and we shall have to wait for an indefinite time if

we wait for a private agency to spring up. This work is urgent, the work of educating the people, isn't it?

A. Yes.

Q. You agree that educational propaganda films are very good so long as free exhibitions are given: you don't think they are a paying concern so that no private agency would be induced to take it up: unless he could produce amusing films, this would be merely an adjunct to his profession.

A. Exactly.

Q. How many American films have you seen?

A. I think most of the films I have seen have been American.

Q. Did you pause to consider whether they are American or British? Can you tell from seeing a film whether it is American, German or British?

A. The film does show it. I cannot tell you offhand.

Q. Then when you characterise these as mostly American films you are merely taking up a cry which you have seen in the papers?

A. It may be that my opinion was affected by that: but most of the films, I consider, are American.

Q. So you are rather influenced by the cry in the press?

A. It may be partly that and partly the films that I saw.

Mr. Coatsman: You said that in the Punjab travelling cinemas go about showing propaganda and instructional films. Who sent those travelling cinemas out?

A. I sent one lorry. I am a member of a Rural Community Board and they started this show. They asked me to get some films prepared.

Q. Do any other departments send out these travelling cinemas?

A. For the whole of the Punjab I have got one lorry.

Q. What is the Rural Community Board?

A. It was formed some years ago to watch over the interests of the rural people.

Q. Is it an elected board?

A. No, we have got about half a dozen members.

Q. Who are they?

A. The Minister for Education is the president, and then the heads of departments are members. I am one of the members.

Q. Are they chosen by Government then?

A. I think by the Minister.

Q. Who asked you?

A. The Ministry of Education.

Q. Then the probability is that the Ministry of Education runs it. And of course it is financed by Government?

A. Yes.

Q. And there is just this one travelling cinema?

A. Yes.

Q. It goes all over the Punjab?

A. So far we have visited about 8 districts.

Q. Going into the villages, not only into towns?

A. No, we have left out the towns but not altogether; we go to some out of the way places like Jhelum, Sargoda, etc., but generally we go to the villages.

Q. The shows are free?

A. Free open air shows.

Q. Do they attract?

A. Oh yes. The assistant I sent reports that there were huge crowds. In fact I received telegrams from one or two places asking me to permit the lorry to stay for another day. Of course I told the Director of Public Instruction and he said he would let me know what the effect is; but this is the report I received from the assistant.

Q. There is a big demand for it?

A. I think so.

Q. You could do with more?

A. Yes.

Q. Have you ever been out with it yourself?

A. No. I have sent one of my clerks; but when I have been seeing those films in the office, even in a place like Lahore—my place is very near the D. A. V. College—students have come in to see these shows. I think because it is free people are bound to be attracted.

Q. If you charge a small fee for admission what will be the effect?

A. I don't think it will do. Later on we could try charging a small fee as an experiment but I don't know what effect that will have.

Q. Would a private cinema have any chance of making money?

A. It is a very difficult question, because it would depend on the kind of films that you would exhibit. I don't think my own films would very much appeal to the people.

Q. Do any of the municipalities in the Punjab do anything in this line?

A. No, not to my knowledge.

Q. What about the Baby Week?

A. I think the Public Health Department runs it.

Q. Does the Lahore Municipality buy any films?

A. Not to my knowledge.

Q. Is the North Western Railway doing anything in this line?

A. Yes, they have a projector of their own, and I understand that they are going to run a demonstration train from the 7th of December, and they will have a few of their own films. I believe they are going to hire films from the G. I. P. Rly.

Q. Have they not asked the local men to do anything?

A. I don't think so.

Q. They have done work for the Registrar of the Co-operative Credit Societies and for you also, is it not?

A. Yes.

Q. Has their work given you satisfaction?

A. I think so, except in one or two cases. I am preparing a Railway film showing scenes from Kulu Valley and Maudi Fair, and I think the photographs are excellent.

Q. I think you said that these two producing firms have not produced any dramas?

A. No.

Q. I have noticed when I was in the Punjab on occasions like Sir Malcolm Hailey reviewing the police, the local men were taking the films and those films were afterwards shown in the local theatres. Is it your experience or opinion that those topical films were attractive?

A. I don't think they were generally, but supposing there was an important function at Ferozepur or in some other place and you showed a film relating to it without any loss of time, it would always attract people because time is the essence in this case.

Q. I was very interested in what you were saying to the Chairman about the comparative advantages of a Government studio and private enterprise for producing such films as the Government wants, and I want to go a little more deeply with you into that question. You said that films produced by a Gov-

ernment studio would be cheaper and better. Now, if the Government were to have a studio and a laboratory equipped on the best and up-to-date western lines with experts in charge of it, I cannot understand how the films will be cheaper and better?

A. I don't think I intended that. On reconsideration I think it was an off-hand reply. The fact is, now we pay Rs. 1-8-0 per foot for the first copy, and if we have to buy a second copy we have to pay Re. 0-12-0 or Re. 1 per foot.

Q. Have you ever approached Madans?

A. No.

Q. Have you any idea of the cost of production in England?

A. No, but I have heard from people who know about it that in India it should not cost more than 4 or 6 annas a foot for the first copy of topical films, but for producing dramas it might cost more.

Q. Suppose you had a Government studio with experts. How do you propose to employ that studio and those experts?

A. If we have got a central organization in charge of one man with three or four photographers under him, I think we should be able to employ them.

Q. I think you visualised bringing out experts from London studios. What about the director?

A. As far as the departmental films are concerned, I don't think there would be much difficulty in giving directions. For instance, if I want any film prepared, I could certainly give an outline or sketch of the film that I want. Similarly, if the head of the Co-operative Department wants a particular film, he could also give an outline to the man in charge and get the film prepared.

Q. Suppose you want a film, the Registrar of Co-operative Societies wants a film, the Director of Public Health wants a film and the Director of Public Instruction also wants a film, and let us say the Lahore Municipality also wants a film at the same time. How do you expect the Government studio to cope with all the demands at the same time?

A. My own idea is, if heads of beneficent departments want to produce their own films, like films relating to agricultural implements and so on, I don't think such films would require much technical knowledge.

Q. I am talking about the Government studio being able to cope with the demand?

A. I am talking of the films that should be produced, and I confine myself to the educational films produced by the department.

Q. You agree that a Government run studio would be the best agency for producing films for the various departments?

A. Certainly, it would be a cheaper agency.

Q. Does it not occur to you that, first of all, more demands might be made on that studio than it would be able to cope with, and that it would be better to apply to private firms, because they have to compete with each other, and their overhead charges are spread, not only over the Government film, but over any film which they may be producing?

A. Naturally they would like to make money over it.

Q. Is it your experience that the Government agency would be the best and cheapest for doing work?

A. I have got no experience, but that is my idea.

Q. If you were building a house, would you prefer it to be done by the P.W.D. or by a private contractor?

A. Personally, I should prefer to do it myself.

Q. I believe there are no producers in the Punjab outside Lahore?

A. No, not to my knowledge.

Q. Now, if you were to put up a Government studio to do work for all the departments, don't you think you would be killing the two producing companies?

A. My reply to the Chairman was that, as far as cheapness in production and quality were concerned, Government agency would be the best. We might of course kill the indigenous industry. But personally, as I told you, I have not got much experience in this matter, but if any of the local producers were entrusted with this work, they would be quite happy to do it if you paid them say Rs. 400 or Rs. 500 per month, because I don't think they are making much on their own productions.

Q. But in view of the desirability of developing the film industry in this country, and particularly in the Punjab, don't you think that the course which you propose, namely the opening of a Government studio, would be worse and it would kill the existing concerns?

A. Taking it from that point of view, I certainly think a Government studio would stand in the way of the existing industries,—there is no denying that fact at all,—but from the point of view of the firms such a course would be better.

Q. Don't you think as an alternative to that, if you had a well established private producing firm, with plenty of work, it would improve itself?

A. It may, I am not quite sure about it.

Q. Do you seriously suggest that the Government, whether Central or Provincial, should undertake the task of developing the film industry in this country? Do you think they could?

A. I think they could. My reply was confined only to the production of films in this province, and that would certainly be a better arrangement. I do not know anything about the wider issue.

Q. From the point of view of quality I think you must agree that Government agency would be more desirable?

A. It would depend on the kind of men you would employ.

Q. Don't you think it would mean a severe knock to the producing firms?

A. Yes, they will suffer.

Chairman: Are they doing anything now? Why did they come into existence? Was it for doing Government work only?

A. I think they knew the work and they wanted to start work, but I don't think they have done anything but Government work so far.

Mr. Neogy: When you gave your opinion about the Government owned studio you were thinking of a studio owned by the Local Government or located within the jurisdiction of the Local Government. Supposing instead of that we had an All-India studio owned by the Government of India or owned by all the Provincial Governments in partnership, and supposing that studio were located either in Bombay or Calcutta, would you be able to depend on such a studio for supplying all your needs?

A. I was more or less thinking of the departments in the Punjab.

Q. The idea so far put forward has been that there should be a central studio for the whole of India located,—I do not know where—would you be prepared to depend upon that studio, wherever it may be, not necessarily located near your province, for supplying all your requirements by way of departmental propaganda films?

A. I don't think I could depend upon such a central agency at Bombay or Madras.

Q. I am in sympathy with you all at once. But would that central agency necessarily be a very cheap agency for producing your propaganda films, wherever it may be?

A. I could not say.

Q. I suppose you were only thinking of the conditions in the Punjab and you were thinking of the agency that might be controlled in the Punjab for the benefit of the Punjab Government?

A. Yes.



**Q.** Regarding cheapness, suppose we had a central studio have you considered the possibility of having very many administrative officers that might be appointed to run the department? You may have, for instance, a Chief Commissioner of Films on a salary of Rs. 4,000 or Rs. 5,000, with experts under him who will have to be paid not only high salaries but overseas pay, and motor allowances, then again a very huge clerical establishment and liveried chappassis, and so on. From your experience of Government work all these years and their methods, have you no apprehension that if you were to leave any such thing to the mercies of Government it might develop into an expensive department such as the one I have tried to picture to you?

**A.** I have not got such notions of Government departments as you seem to have. My own idea is that a modest office would be quite enough.

**Q.** Perhaps you are thinking of the Punjab standard and not of the Government of India standard.

**A.** I do not know anything about the Government of India standard.

**Q.** That particular standard would determine the cost?

**A.** If you choose to spend lakhs and lakhs you can do so, but the question is whether such a huge and costly establishment will be necessary at all for running this show. I am only speaking about the Punjab, and I can't say anything about the Government of India.

**Q.** You stated that the quality of the photography of your departmental films was excellent and what the films lacked was due more to the insufficiency of departmental directions?

**A.** In regard to my own films I had not sufficient time to direct them properly. I left the thing to the photographer, and that was my mistake. If I had the time to direct him properly, probably the photographs would have been better. It should be the duty of the department concerned to direct the man properly whenever any film is wanted by it.

**Q.** The department only knows its needs and you cannot depend upon an expert for doing everything. So, even if you had the best of photographers brought out from England and even if you had the best of studios somewhere in Bombay or Calcutta, you would still have to give directions to those experts?

**A.** Yes, and if we failed to give them the necessary directions, the quality of the films will certainly be poor.

**Mr. Green :** I understand that as Director of Information what you want is suitable films?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** And you want films with adequate technical knowledge?

**Q.** I don't want to follow Mr. Neogy to the heights of Simla, but if we had a studio anywhere, you don't mind how it is financed if they give you what you want, whether it is in Lahore or anywhere else?

**A.** When I was replying to the other Members, I was considering the conditions in the Punjab, and I would certainly prefer to have an agency in the Punjab.

**Q.** Has it occurred to you that it might be possible for you to go to different places yourself to instruct the producing agency outside the Punjab or for that agency actually to send its camera men or technical men to take photographs under your directions in the Punjab?

**A.** I think if our work were to be done in the Punjab it would certainly be much better.

**Q.** Do you see any insuperable objection if you get technical men from other parts of India to the Punjab and get the technical work done in the Punjab under your directions?

**A.** I don't think it would be quite a feasible proposition. For instance, if we want to produce here, a film relating to agricultural implements which are in use in this country, a man from Bombay would not be of much use.

**Q.** But the man who handles the camera won't be concerned with agriculture; he will be concerned with his own camera and nothing else?

A. I am talking of the production of films in the Punjab. Punjabis would like to see a film showing certain lands tilled by Punjab implements and by Punjabi men. Bringing a camera man all the way from Bombay would be expensive.

*Colonel Crauford :* Would you provide us with a statement of the amount of money now spent by the Punjab Government in all its departments, including the North Western Railway, on the production and exhibition of films? Let us know how much money you are spending?

A. Yes, I will ask the Department to do it.

**\*Oral Evidence of Lieut.-Colonel C. A. GILL, I.M.S., Director of Public Health, Punjab, on Thursday, the 24th November 1927.**

*Chairman :* You are the Director of Public Health?

A. Yes.

Q. How long have you held that office?

A. I have just taken it over. I have been here for nearly 20 years. Most of my service has been in the Punjab except during the war.

Q. I believe you think that there is great scope for educating the people in matters of hygiene and public health by means of the cinema?

A. Yes, the cinema is very valuable as a means of public health propaganda.

Q. I understand the Punjab Government are doing a great deal in educating the people in public health and so on?

A. Yes. Up to recently we have been using magic lanterns for carrying on public health propaganda, but we find that the cinema is a much more effective and popular method of teaching the masses about public health work.

Q. Has your department produced many films in that line?

A. I got them from America in 1925. I got a film on Malaria before we could get any locally produced, but we have recently purchased our own projectors, and we hope to be able to produce them here. What we want is our own films to suit local conditions.

Q. I suppose foreign films in that line will also be useful?

A. Yes, but they ought to have an Indian setting. On the film that we got out from America we had to print Urdu captions because they were all in English. For us here especially we want a Punjab setting. We have not yet produced any film in that line.

Q. From your point of view it requires the direction of your department in order to produce a good film of that sort?

A. Yes, we want to arrange what we want done and get it done by the photographer, but the mounting and other things will have to be done by a public health man.

Q. Don't you think it would better if the Government themselves did those things with the aid of their expert camera men?

A. That I believe is the proposal, but the whole question is now under consideration of the Government. The proposal is that for all propaganda in connection with Health, Agriculture, Co-operative Departments and Education we should have one organization for taking the photographs, and that each department should arrange with the central organization. There is a letter now from Government asking us to make proposals in regard to the best way of organizing this arrangement.

Q. I suppose all the departments will have to meet and decide?

A. I think each department has been asked to put up its own views. But my own view is that we should have our own studio on which all departments could indent: we should like to have a central organization from which each department could get its supplies.

**Q.** Now, I quite see the point of view about the Punjab setting, but in view of the expense involved, don't you think it would be better if several Governments pooled their resources together in this matter from the point of view of economy?

**A.** I do not know what the expense would be, but I should have thought that we had enough money to run our own studio, and such a studio will be certainly much more handy with our own staff always at our command. But if it is very costly, then perhaps it would be necessary to have a central organization in which all the Governments could pool their resources. From the point of view of Public Health we do not want any elaborate studio at all. We only want a man who knows how to take the photographs. We have to get up the setting, and suppose we have to go to a Punjab village to take a scene there, it would be very convenient if we had our own man. But if you had a central organization of the Government somewhere, it would be impossible to get our local films properly done.

**Q.** You must have a well equipped studio locally in order to have the thing printed, edited and published?

**A.** I have not gone into the details of that part of the subject, but I think we can do a great deal by having our own studio here.

**Q.** Don't you think that in order to make those films attractive there should be some plots written connected with the subjects you would be dealing with; there should be a story and for that you must have scenario writers, story writers and so on?

**A.** I have not yet thought over it seriously. That may come along, but at the present time we have only been endeavouring to illustrate our point of view of Public Health. Instead of story writing and so on, it would be very much more effective if the masses are shown moving pictures. We have not thought of plots in which public health will be amalgamated.

**Q.** That is what I mean.

**A.** That is all. We have not thought of writing plots in which public health will be amalgamated or anything of that sort.

**Q.** That is the way they do it in America and Germany—all this knowledge they convey by these means.

**A.** I should say that might perhaps come later, but we ought to make a start. I think we could quite well start with a simpler thing than that.

**Q.** Anyway, your Government in its various departments is considering this question now?

**A.** Yes, and there are certain developments being made and some departments have taken their own films. I saw a very good one in Simla made by the Co-operative Department.

**Q.** Where was it taken?

**A.** In one of the villages in some district. I think it was Montgomery.

**Mr. Coulman :** You remember who produced it?

**A.** Mr. Strickland.

**Q.** Who was the cinema man who produced it?

**A.** I never heard that. But all the men who took part in it were good and they were all local men who made excellent film stars.

**Chairman :** Yes, we found that.

**A.** But we have not tried anything like that in public health yet.

**Q.** Your present view is that there should be a studio which the government should run directly?

**A.** I think at the present stage it would be better to have our own Punjab Government one for all the various departments.

**Q.** Instead of each department employing a private agency to do their work?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Do you go to the cinema much yourself?

A. I am not a cinema fiend, but I go when I want to be amused.

Q. When you feel overworked?

A. I am not one of the people who live there, like some people do.

Q. Generally you go in Lahore?

A. I go in Lahore, I go at Home.

Q. But I mean here. Have you any reason to be dissatisfied with the censorship as it is now carried on?

A. None.

Q. You have not come across any films or scenes which should not have been permitted?

A. No, I have not.

Col. Crawford: I would like to press some of the questions that the Chairman has put. Our examination of the problem has shown the great necessity, even in the publicity films that are being shown out here, of greatly improved technique. It might be advisable to bring definite experts from foreign countries. They would be costly. For instance, a first class camera man knowing how to take a picture, we understand, gets as much as £80 a week or even more, £50.

Chairman: In Germany you would get them cheaper.

A. Excuse me. Are you talking about films for public health work or for taking any ordinary films.

Col. Crawford: Any films. Who would really know how to take the film, who would know the lighting that would be required for your particular film. So if a staff of that sort were brought out, it would be fairly costly?

A. Yes.

Q. It is obvious it would be beyond the pocket, probably, of any provincial government?

A. Yes.

Q. Supposing that all provincial governments were to pool their resources in the first instance and to have a general central studio, a first class studio producing your films under your direction with the characters and the scenes that you require. Would such a studio assist a provincial government to train up, eventually, its own operators and its own staff, so that it could take these provincial films?

A. Well, my view is that it is not the business of government at all. Why should government undertake this vast organisation to encourage and bolster up the film industry.

Q. I am at the moment talking solely about the work you want done. You are spending money or contemplate spending money.

A. I should have thought that departments, like my own any way, could obtain their films, suitable educational films, without any elaborate organisation. That is my present view.

Q. But would you have any objection, for instance, if after inquiry we find that the provincial governments are spending sufficient money individually, to maintain a really first class studio, if the money were pooled, capable of producing not indifferent pictures but really first class pictures of educational value for the different departments.

A. Yes, it would be very excellent if we could do that.

Q. Purely for educational purposes. Of course, it does come in on the other side that it would quite possibly be an inspiration to the industry by keeping a high standard before them.

A. Well, I would welcome any organisation which would enable us to get really first-class propaganda films for the public health or any other department. Whether it would be better to have one with the Government of India or the local Government is a matter of cost. If you say it is so costly, it would be better to have a central one.

**Q.** Because you can suggest in a studio a scene in a Punjab village just as well as you can on the actual ground.

**A.** Probably better.

**Q.** It is a mere question of cost. It would be less costly in the long run if it was done centrally. I will put only one other question to you as Director of Public Health. Have you seen or do you think there is any possibility of the films being shown in India damaging eyesight? The films shown in India are so often worn out. Has it been brought to your notice at all?

**A.** No, I have no information on the point.

**Q.** We understand that what is known as junk from America—old and worn-out films—are shown in the mofussil. The projectors are bad and you get a lot of flickering.

**A.** I have not any knowledge nor heard any complaint of that sort. The films I have seen myself have so much improved of recent years that flickering is not often seen—in big cities anyway.

**Chairman :** Supposing we had a central studio like that suggested by Col. Crawford, you would not object if private people employed in that industry used that studio for their own purposes when it is available, when it is not being used for government needs?

**A.** Well, it has nothing to do with me. But I should have thought it would not be a very desirable thing mixing it like that. If it was a government agency it should do government work only.

**Q.** Why not? Personally what is your objection to its being used when it is lying idle?

**A.** On general principles, that is all. That if you have got a government show for preparing films for one special purpose, it would be rather difficult to have some competition with private enterprise in the same place.

**Q.** Not competition. Private firms to use the studio for producing their films either on nominal terms or fairly costly—on a commercial basis. I would put it at a fairly nominal rate, so that the industry may prosper.

**A.** Well, personally, I do not think it would be a very desirable arrangement but it would be really a matter of policy for the Government of India.

**Mr. Green :** Only one question. Did you meet the Social Hygiene Delegation when it came to India?

**A.** No, I was home on leave when they came.

**Q.** I will only put one of their statements to you, namely "that the evil influence of the cinema was cited by educationists and the representative citizens as one of the major factors in lowering the standard of sex conduct and thereby tending to increase the dissemination of disease." Do you think there is anything to substantiate that statement?

**A.** So far as we are concerned, absolutely nothing.

**Mr. Neogy :** You stated that it would be desirable to have provincial settings to your pictures in order to make them attractive?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Supposing your theme had to be woven into a story, even that story would have to be written from the provincial point of view?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** And by men who know the province? So you would not depend upon an expert brought out from any other country to write out a story for you, would you?

**A.** No. The expert would manipulate material provided by me.

**Q.** Therefore there won't be any advantage in having an expert story-writer for any central body?

**A.** Not for public health education.

**Q.** May I take it that the majority of pictures, public health propaganda pictures, have to be taken in the open air?

A. Yes, it would be desirable in connection with rural welfare to have rural scenes and for municipal welfare to have municipal scenes.

Q. And supposing facilities were provided in the studio for the reproduction of certain scenes under artificial light and in artificial scenes and with the help of artificial properties and things of that sort, would that be an advantage, or would pictures taken in actual surroundings be better? Which would you prefer?

A. Well, if suitable, the actual thing is always better than the imitation.

Q. So the studio would not have that attraction from this particular point of view?

A. No.

Mr. Green : May I interject one thing? We were assured by the cinema experts that in the cinema trade the unnatural is much better than the natural, also that no up-to-date films are now taken without the continuous aid of artificial light—even out-door scenes.

Mr. Neogy : You have seen a picture taken by Mr. Strickland? You were satisfied with the photography of it?

A. I think it was very good.

Q. And you would be perfectly satisfied if you were assured of such work?

A. Yes.

Q. And if I tell you that that work was done by experts who are already in India and perhaps in the Punjab, you would be prepared to entrust your work to that agency, would you?

A. Yes, I think that that was quite suitable.

Mr. Coatsman : I just want to round off what Mr. Neogy has been asking you. Your films, of course, will be quite simple?

A. Oh yes, we want simple things. These things must be simple and no elaborate plots, I think, would be proper at present.

Q. You are not going to worry about close-ups and stunts and anything of that sort?

A. No.

Q. Have you any idea, is it possible to have any idea at present of how many films you are likely to want in the course of a year—how many feet?

A. No, I cannot say. I think there is great room for development. We are only just beginning. It is rather difficult to say. It depends on the amount of money.

Mr. Green : An hour's film means 4,000 feet.

Mr. Coatsman : But at any rate those films would have to be bought out of your annual budget?

A. Yes.

Q. And your purpose is entirely instructive and educational, not entertainment?

A. Entirely, not entertainment at all.

Q. And therefore you would want as much as you can get for your money?

A. Yes.

Q. You would be prepared to buy your film where it is cheapest?

A. Yes.

Q. I think you approve of Mr. Strickland's film?

A. Yes.

Q. Well, I happen to know that that film was produced in Lahore.

A. Was it?

Q. By a Mr. Widdicombe. The quality of that film satisfies you?

A. Yes.

Q. If you get films like that you will be satisfied.

A. I think the film was entirely suited for the audience it was for. And I would like similar films on public health lines and the organisation that did that would meet our requirements in public health as far as I can see for some time to come.

Q. You have had a long experience of the Public Works Department in the matter of building dispensaries and so on?

A. Yes, I know something about it.

Q. Do you think they are the cheapest agency you could employ?

A. For what purpose?

Q. Building dispensaries. When you think of all their supervision charges and so forth?

A. Well, I am not out to criticise another department of Government.

Q. Oh no. I am only thinking from the point of view of expense. My point is that this government studio may turn out to be more expensive than you think.

A. Yes, I think as a rule, it is a general proposition, with which most people somehow seem to agree, that if you can get private enterprise to do a thing it is better than if done by government.

Q. And so you yourself would have no objection whatever to having your work done by a private firm if you were satisfied as to its quality?

A. None whatever.

Chairman: Have you made any attempt for all the departments now to cooperate in the matter of producing films?

A. No. We are in the process of doing so. It is under consideration now.

Q. And I suppose you would agree that the closer the attention you can get from the audience the better for your instruction?

A. Yes, obviously.

Q. And a mere teacher lecturing does not get that attention from every part of the audience which a film carries?

A. No.

Q. And if a film contains a plot, the closer will be the attention? If it is mere simple instruction it would not have the same hold?

A. Yes, I think that is so.

Q. A plot always carries the attention of the audience.

A. Yes.

**Oral Evidence of Mr. C. M. G. OGILVIE, I.C.S., District Magistrate,  
Lahore, on Thursday, the 24th November 1927.**

Chairman: How long have you been District Magistrate here?

A. For two and a half years in Lahore.

Q. You must have been in the mofussil districts also?

A. Yes.

Q. Can you tell us where all the cinemas are in the Punjab?

A. In the Punjab? I could not, but I can say that there are cinemas in all the big towns of the Punjab, but not the small towns. There are certainly cinemas in places like Rawalpindi, Multan, Sialkot, Lahore, Amritsar.

Mr. Neogy: All district towns?

A. No. I dare say there may be small cinemas even in places like Gujranwala, Kasur and places like that.

Chairman: Here I suppose the cinema is getting more and more popular?

A. Very popular.

**Q.** More people are going to the cinema, the numbers are increasing every year?

**A.** I think so.

**Q.** I suppose there are very few Indian films shown in this province?

**A.** Very few indeed.

**Q.** They say there are two places here which produce some films. Have you seen them?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Do they produce for the public or only for the Government?

**A.** Primarily, I should say, for the Government.

**Q.** Have they produced any films for the public?

**A.** I have not seen any, but they may have done so.

**Q.** At any rate you do not know of any?

**A.** No.

**Q.** Do you go to the cinema frequently?

**A.** As often as my duties allow me to go. It may be once a month in the cold weather.

**Q.** Where do you go when you go?

**A.** I try them all. It depends on what is the attractive programme for the time being. There are five good ones here.

**Q.** I suppose they are generally western films which you have seen?

**A.** Almost entirely American.

**Q.** What are the two points on which your opinion was asked?

**A.** The two parts of Question No. 2.

**Q.** Is it your impression which you have given.

**A.** After consultation with the police officers who habitually attend the cinemas and from my own impressions also.

**Q.** There are police officers who habitually attend the cinemas?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Some people are told off for the purpose?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** What are they to do?

**A.** Their chief function is to see that the films do not contain anything which is too offensive to be shown.

**Q.** And do they make any reports to you?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** In the last two years have you had any occasion to deal with any reports of that sort?

**A.** Many.

**Q.** What was the nature of the reports?

**A.** That films were unsuitable for the Punjab audiences. Sometimes the Delhi Board or the Bombay Board of Censors have passed a film and the Calcutta Board of Censors have not; a film has been certified by one and not certified by the other and so on. Chiefly I have been concerned with various items in the film which seem to be too objectionable to allow.

**Q.** What action do you take on that? Did you find the complaints well founded?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** What action did you take?

**A.** In one case I remember allowing a film to be shown after 15 feet of it had been removed, and in another case I have forbidden it to be shown at all.

**Q.** How many cases will there be like that?

**A.** I should say 8 or 10.



**Q.** What was the nature of the film which you cut off a few feet from?

**A.** I think it was "The Nieblungs". It was a good film, but there was one portion of it where there was a lady with no clothes on—that part was removed.

**Q.** And the other 8 or 9 cases?

**A.** One I remember. It is "The Ten Commandments" in which the presentation of the Prophet Moses was objected to.

**Q.** By the Mussalmans?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Of course, there is nothing objectionable from the moral point of view?

**A.** No.

**Q.** It was only a sentimental feeling,

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** As regards the other cases can you give us a list of those cases?

**A.** I think I could.

**Q.** With your reasons?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** What happens when the policeman reports to you. Do you take action yourself or do you take in the assistance of any one in the matter?

**A.** I forgot to mention another type of case. There was another film which I did not forbid myself. I asked the management not to show it and they did not show it. The whole question is very difficult indeed and one does not exactly know where to draw the line very often.

**Q.** Do you take any assistance when you act on the report of the policeman?

**A.** The matter is referred to the Punjab Government.

**Q.** Before you decide? I suppose under the Act the District Magistrate has to decide?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** The power of suspension is given to the District Magistrate?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** And you take in the assistance of any assessors or people of the kind?

**A.** No.

**Q.** You decide it for yourself?

**A.** Usually the senior Superintendent of Police helps.

**Q.** Does he also see the film with you?

**A.** I think he has done so in one or two cases.

**Q.** In such cases would you advocate or would you have any objection to consulting the local Censor Board?

**A.** I do not know whether our Censor Board has come into existence.

**Q.** It has come into existence. We had the Board this morning.

**A.** I have not had occasion to come across their activities. I would be certainly very glad to divest myself of all responsibility in the matter.

**Q.** In these matters I suppose it is better to have two or three heads on a question of taste like that. It is a very difficult matter really to decide. On the one side you have got the art and the trade and on the other you have rather individual notions about morality. Are you satisfied with the existing censorship?

**A.** No.

**Q.** You think it ought to be more rigorous?

**A.** Much more.

**Q.** In what respects?

**A.** In practically all respects. I think the class of film which comes to India is poisonous rubbish in 80 per cent. of the cases, and really good films

do not find their way to this country as a general rule. A few do, but most of the others are pure rubbish and I think their effect is deleterious. That is my candid opinion.

*Q.* I suppose you would not allow them to be shown even in England?

*A.* I think they are bad in England too, but not quite so bad, because in England people after all are living in England and they do know that the things which are portrayed on the screen do not happen in the streets in which they live. But when the film is shown in other countries people possibly think that it does represent a true picture of life in England. I do not think they do good in England but they do less harm.

*Q.* You mean nudity and semi-nudity scenes?

*A.* Not only that but the general stressing of the sexual motive. It is very common in films that we see here.

*Q.* I suppose from your point of view the Indian public should not see dances?

*A.* I think the Indian public is, as a rule, rather super-sensitive on these sexual matters.

*Q.* You would rather prefer that they should not see dances?

*A.* I do not say dances in particular. I cannot lay any particular stress on any particular instance, but I consider the general stressing of sexual motives and scenes which excite sexual interest should be deprecated.

*Q.* That I suppose is universal with every human being?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Why do you lay stress that the Indian should not see it?

*A.* I think Indians as a general rule are more sensitive, as I say, on the sexual question than we are.

*Q.* That is a matter of opinion.

*A.* This is a country where the purdah system largely prevails. It is a matter of opinion of course. It is my opinion.

*Q.* You would advocate different standards of censorship and different rules of censorship between India and England?

*A.* I would. I would myself advocate the same standard of censorship in England, but I could hardly find as good reasons for England as for India.

*Q.* Moreover public opinion there may not help you in that?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Do you think if, according to you, 80 per cent. of the pictures now shown are cut off, the cinema would be attractive at all? Would it be a paying concern?

*A.* If really good stuff is put on I certainly think it would. I think the Indian audience is extraordinarily appreciative of a good film.

*Q.* You mean good technique.....

*A.* A really fine show, a really good film like "The Battle of Zeebrugge"—that film attracted enormous crowds.

*Mr. Coatman:* "The Thief of Baghdad".

*A.* Yes. It drew enormous audiences. I do not think it was a particularly good one, but really good ones are appreciated very much when the Indian public gets them. It is only rarely they do get them.

*Q.* You would eliminate all pictures which show social life?

*A.* I would not. I would keep the healthy comic, I think Charlie Chaplin is probably very good. Harold Lloyd—I would keep his films.

*Q.* Those which depict social life in a way you would exclude?

*A.* Those that do not depict social life I should prefer to say.

*Mr. Green:* Those which parody social life?

*A.* Yes.

*Chairman:* Do you think that the people of this country are unable to look at them merely as pictures for amusement?

A. "People of this country" is so wide a term. There are among the audiences a small percentage which certainly do that, but there is a large percentage which is not so well equipped.

Q. Have you had any conversations with that class of people?

A. Yes.

Q. Did they ask whether this is the life you lead?

A. No. I think they would probably consider it to be very rude.

Q. But how did you gather that impression?

A. They would not say so in so many words, but from the presentation that they receive they think that we are, in certain ways,—particularly in sexual ways,—a very curious people.

Q. That is what you think they think?

A. I think so. Many of them, I do not say all, but many of them. As to the illiterate masses who come in large numbers to the cinemas, which are very popular with them—what they think I do not really know.

Mr. Green: Do they understand it at all?

A. I should not think they understand the plot at all. They only understand the various presentations, something which arouses their interest and excitement.

Chairman: Have you given instructions to these people who make these inspections of the cinemas, the police whose duty it is to go and see?

A. Yes.

Q. What class of films they have to report upon?

A. Yes.

Q. Can you give us a copy of those instructions?

A. Yes.

Colonel Crawford: I suppose you are the licensing authority for cinemas here?

A. No.

Q. Do they not have to get licenses from you?

A. No.

Q. I mean for the theatres?

A. Yes. They have to.

Q. You think the licensing regulations are all that is required?

A. I think that they are. Perhaps the condition as regards the safety of the building might be more rigorous.

Q. You have no other suggestions to make in that respect?

A. No.

Q. I notice you consider that a large proportion of the films shown are of what you call the "rubbish standard"?

A. Yes.

Q. Many of them making their big draw from the sex appeal?

A. Yes.

Q. Are you of opinion if those are definitely shut out that importers would bring the right stamp?

A. I am not in a position to say. I think it will probably cost more.

Chairman: Wherefrom do you expect them to get them?

A. I am not an authority on the subject at all. I suppose from the agencies which deal with films, which send films out from the place where they are produced to various countries. I take it that some films cost very much more than others, in fact I have heard that they do.

Mr. Green: You have told us that in certain cases you excise portions of films before allowing them to be exhibited. I am not in any way criticising such action, but is it actually within the Act?

A. No.

Q. I take it you do it by arrangement?

A. Mutual arrangement.

Q. Do you know whether they re-insert the excised portion afterwards?

A. I should think so.

Q. If they did it, the film would be technically an uncertified film?

A. Yes.

Q. You are very anxious, as we all are, to have better films. We have good reason to believe that you can get good films, but you have to pay for them.

A. Yes.

Q. It is the common practice in Bombay we were told when a particularly good film is shown to raise the prices of admission by anything up to 50 per cent.

A. The prices of admission here are three times as much as those prevailing in Europe as it is.

Q. Do you think the public would willingly pay, or would even pay at all, higher prices for better films?

A. Well, they will gladly pay for Rs. 3 and Rs. 2 seats.

Q. That would be the upper class Europeans and educated Indians?

A. Yes. As regards the lower classes they would not. It is not from them really that the management expects to draw its profits.

Q. At present the cinemas in this city are not catering for the lower classes?

A. No, not intentionally so, at any rate.

Q. And it is not, at any rate, an objection to the class of film; I take it your objection is chiefly because of the unfortunate effect on the lower classes?

A. I would not say on the "lower classes." I would also include semi-educated classes.

Q. In that you might include, possibly, students?

A. Yes, because they have not finished their education.

Chairman: Clerks and such other people also?

A. Yes. It is a very large class.

Mr. Green: I am not quite clear whether you would go the extent of stiffening the censorship to such an extent that 80 per cent. of the films should be cut out, whether you consider that a practical proposition?

A. I frankly do not, but I would go as far as I possibly could in that direction. I would hitch my wagon to a star.

Mr. Neogy: Have you taken action generally on police reports or on information from any private party also?

A. Yes. In the case of two films which I can remember offhand I took action on the information of private parties.

Q. What were the grounds of objection, if you remember, in those two cases?

A. One was the religious ground, the other was, I think, public policy generally. It refers to public policy generally.

Chairman: It is a very vague term.

A. It is. It portrayed the massacre of respectable people by the mob, and they did not think it was a good thing.

Mr. Neogy: Do you get any general instructions in regard to these matters from the Government of the Punjab as to how you are to exercise this discretion?

A. No.

Q. No instructions are given to anybody?

A. No. But, of course, if one did interfere in an arbitrary manner Government would probably tell him to stop doing so. The film people would probably complain of any such action. I often wanted to interfere much more,—I should like to, particularly with regard to posters. They are often much worse than the films. I do not think they are censored at all.

Q. You have no power for censoring posters?

A. Yes. I do not interfere with them unless they are positively indecent which they occasionally are.

Q. In fact two instances were brought to our notice this morning of hand bills which were stopped. Is it possible for different officers to take different views of the very same thing?

A. I should not think so, not in a general way. Some might feel about it more strongly than others, but generally their conclusions would be the same.

Q. You have stated there may be cases in which films which may be suitable for other parts of the country may not be suitable for the Punjab.

A. I have no knowledge whatever of any other part of the country and so I cannot say. I meant other countries. What I meant to say was, if a ludicrous travesty of Indian life were portrayed in India, it might probably be all right because Indians would know it is a ludicrous travesty. But if a ludicrous travesty of life in any other country is portrayed to them they may not understand it at all rightly.

Q. Supposing such a scene or such a film is passed by the Bombay Board of Censors or the Bengal Board of Censors, that I take it will, in your opinion, amount to a judgment by those bodies about the suitability of the films to be shown in those provinces only?

A. Yes.

Q. If in such a case you were to stop that film, you would be doing so because you think it is not suitable to the Punjab, although it may be suited to other parts of the country?

A. The Bombay and Calcutta audiences may be different, but I should not think they are very different from the little I have seen of them.

Q. You do not think the audiences in any part of the country differ very much from another?

A. I should not think so.

Q. Then you should be glad to accept a uniform standard of censorship, I take it?

A. I should.

Q. And from that point of view, perhaps you would support the scheme of a Central Board of Censors for all India?

A. I do not think Local Boards would be any good at all. I should have a central one myself. I should vote for a central one anyway.

Q. Would you be prepared to submit yourself to the judgment of such a Board?

A. As an exhibit you mean?

Mr. Green: Would you abandon your discretion of suspending a film?

Mr. Neogy: Would you be prepared to abide by the certificate of that Board?

A. I would abandon my discretion entirely on the subject of morals. I might make indignant representations to my Local Government but I would abandon my discretion on that subject, but I would not abandon it as regards political matter. The exhibition of a film, say, of some religious personage, might cause a riot and then I should have to stop it.

Q. But not on general grounds?

A. No.

Q. In regard to those classes of films which misrepresent western life, do you think they have any prejudicial effect on the morals of the people?

A. No.

*Q.* In what way are they injurious then?

*A.* They have a prejudicial effect on their outlook.

*Q.* It would be as bad as teaching wrong history?

*A.* It is teaching rubbish.

*Q.* Have you watched the effect of the exhibition of such films on the Indian public?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Do you think that whatever harmful effect it may have, has already resulted?

*A.* I should think the harm was fairly great myself. I think it is very great. The effect on the mentality of a whole nation is extraordinarily hard to ascertain or to discover, but it is a thing which will make itself manifest gradually. It is a slow poison.

*Q.* But there are other influences also at work simultaneously?

*A.* Yes, but still not in this particular line.

*Q.* Is it not rather difficult to ascribe it to the cinema, for instance, or any other particular factor?

*A.* It should be observed really in connection with the cinema, to see what it is that appeals to them, how their taste is being moulded.

*Q.* But after all you can only imagine what effect it can have?

*A.* That is true.

*Q.* Nothing more definite than that?

*A.* No.

*Mr. Coatsman:* I have just one or two questions to ask. I gathered from what you said about posters that you have seen posters to which you objected?

*A.* I have.

*Q.* Of course a definitely obscene poster you deal with under a section of the Code. Supposing you saw a poster, not definitely obscene, but which you took strong objection to. Could you do nothing?

*A.* I could do nothing. I have on occasion ordered the man to take it down. In another case a lady came to a predecessor of mine and informed him that there was a large poster of a woman wearing only a few feathers. The only reply he could give to her was that he hoped they were in the right places!

**Oral Evidence of Mr. F. W. TOMS, Senior Superintendent of Police, Lahore, on Thursday, the 24th November 1927. (The Inspector of Police in charge of Films accompanied Mr. Toms.)**

*Chairman:* You are the Superintendent of Police for Lahore?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* How long have you been here?

*A.* 18 months as Superintendent of Police at Lahore.

*Q.* Where were you before you came to Lahore?

*A.* I was in the C. I. D. here before that for six months. I have been two years altogether in Lahore.

*Q.* Can you tell us in what parts of the Punjab there are cinemas, or can your Inspector tell us?

*Inspector:* In all big stations. One or two at least. In Ambala, Ferozepur, Ludhiana, Jullundur. In Jullundur they have a regimental cinema, as well as in Multan and Rawalpindi. Most big stations in the Punjab have got cinemas.

**Q.** And how many are there in Lahore city itself?

**A.** Seven altogether; two in the city, four outside and one in cantonments.

**Q.** What do you mean by outside?

**A.** I mean outside the city, in the Civil Lines.

**Q.** All of them run Western films?

**A.** Mostly Western but sometimes Indian pictures.

**Q.** How often are Indian pictures shown?

**A.** About once a month.

**Q.** Where? In the theatres in the city?

**A.** They usually come first to the Civil Lines, and are then hired out to the city. There is one to be shown this Saturday in the city that has not been shown previously in Lahore.

**Q.** Generally they are shown once a month. Indian films?

**A.** About that, Sir, on an average.

**Q.** Are they popular, the Indian films?

**A.** Indian films are usually banned for the Punjab; in proportion with the other films more Indian films are banned than other films. As I said this morning there was one film called "Nur Jehan". It was shown at one cinema in the Civil Lines. No action was taken, nobody objected. The same picture when shown in the city caused some trouble. Then there was another—I don't quite remember the name of it.

**Q.** Both in the Civil Lines and in the city the bulk of the audience is Indian?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** And in the one in the cantonment?

**A.** Soldiers mostly.

**Q.** Of course in cantonments only Western films are shown?

**A.** Usually the same films as those shown in the Civil Lines. The same agent hires out films for both places.

**Q.** The soldiers, are they British soldiers or Indian soldiers?

**A.** British soldiers mostly.

**Q.** And the Indian soldiers, where do they get their cinema entertainment?

**A.** At the same theatre, but I have been down there occasionally and I have not seen very many Indian soldiers. Probably there were some in mufti whom I did not take to be Indian soldiers. But that is the only place where they can see pictures.

**Q.** Can they not go to the Civil Lines?

**A.** Well, it is so far away, five or six miles. Of course they could go if they got leave.

**Q.** So in that respect the cinema supply is not adequate for the Indian Army people?

**A.** No, Sir, that is the only place.

**Q.** So far as these picture shows are concerned, have you heard any complaint from the military that they are not adequate?

**A.** No, Sir.

**Q.** Do the exhibitors here find any difficulty in getting films?

**A.** I don't think so.

**Q.** Do they have weekly changes?

**A.** Twice a week

**Q.** Who owns the theatres?

**A.** Two are owned by Madan's, two are leased by Muhammadans in the city, one is leased by a Sikh, one is run by the railway in their Institute.

**Q.** And they all change their programme?

**A.** Twice a week.

**Q.** They find no difficulty in getting their supplies?

**A.** Not that I know of. The programme is changed twice a week and when a film attracts a good audience it is continued longer.

*Mr. Neogy:* Are they all equally popular, generally speaking?

**A.** The most popular are the two Madan theatres, the Elphinstone and the Excelsior, but a third, the Universal, is being improved. They have improved their accommodation and their orchestra and are attracting larger audiences than they did.

*Chairman:* What is the average attendance daily—on off days, not Saturday or Sunday performances.

**A.** I should say the two big Madan's theatres, which have four shows a day (two in each), take on an average 150 a day if not a little more, perhaps 200.

**Q.** That is the average strength of the audience?

**A.** No, I mean rupees. It is less in the city. I am not quite sure what they get because the Rs. 2 seats are very seldom used in the city.

**Q.** What is the lowest charge in the city?

**A.** Four annas.

**Q.** And the highest?

**A.** They have a few Rs. 2 seats but they are very seldom occupied. The seats are mostly four annas, eight annas and rupee seats. The rupee seats are very popular; the four annas are very popular too, but the rupee seats are about the most popular.

**Q.** So the average income per cinema, how would you put it down? Taking all the cinemas together, what would be the average income per day per cinema?

**A.** About Rs. 150 a day. Taking the seven cinemas together, if run by one man he would make about Rs. 200 a day for each performance.

**Q.** We have just heard from the District Magistrate that there were several complaints made—probably it was by you?

**A.** Yes Sir, I have made complaints.

**Q.** About the nature of the films and the action taken thereon? Was it generally due to your own initiative or did you act on any complaint on the spot?

**A.** Sometimes I try to get in touch with different people in the audience and if I find anything where there is likely to be any trouble I bring it to the notice of the Deputy Commissioner and my Superintendent.

**Q.** When you see trouble on account of religious grounds?

**A.** Either religious grounds or where people object to particular scenes. To give one instance: there was a picture shown "The Eagle" in which Rudolf Valetino was wearing a Cossack uniform. The headdress was in shape the same as a fez cap; and a few Muhammadans in the audience went to the Manager and told him he should not show the picture which was objectionable as the man was wearing a Turkish uniform and a Turkish cap. I spoke to one of these fellows and told them the Cossack uniform had nothing to do with Turkey and they were quite satisfied.

**Q.** It was due to ignorance?

**A.** Those two were educated students by their appearance.

*Mr. Neogy:* Was that character represented in an unfavourable light?

**A.** No, he was taking the main part.



**Q.** Quite an honourable part? There was no question of indignity to the uniform?

**A.** None whatever in my opinion.

**Q.** And there it ended? You did not make a report about it?

**A.** No, it ended there.

**Mr. Coatsman:** Were the two students Muhammadans?

**A.** Yes, I think they were.

**Chairman:** What was the nature of the objection generally taken, religious grounds?

**A.** In that case, people who object usually go to the District Magistrate themselves and he usually directs me to report on the film and I see whether there is anything really objectionable in my opinion. I try to get the opinion of as many people as I can, but I have so much to do.

**Q.** You have other things to do besides the cinema?

**A.** Yes, Sir, I have my own duties.

**Mr. Toms:** I may just point out that the newly constituted Board wanted this Inspector to do all their work. I pointed out his doing this is an absolute extra; unless he is given a suitable allowance I don't see why he should do it at all.

**Inspector:** It involves 14 changes of programme a week that I have got to see, evening and night performances, if I were to do it conscientiously.

**Mr. Toms:** I remember there was one film in the city in which it was represented that Hindu women were represented in an unfavourable light.

**Inspector:** Because of the idea that in the time of the Moghuls a certain subahadar of the Moghul Emperor's had visited a Rajput State and during that period fell in love with the daughter of Rajput Raja. The Moghul subahadar tried various ways to kidnap the girl and after many attempts he succeeded in getting possession of the girl, although he was eventually killed by the Rajputs and the girl was rescued. The film had been censored and passed by the Board of Censors in Bombay.

**Q.** What happened to that?

**Mr. Toms:** That was stopped. I said it should be discontinued and the Deputy Commissioner agreed; so they were told to stop showing it. That was due to the communal situation in Lahore city at the time.

**Inspector:** I don't think the certificate of that film has been suspended.

**Chairman:** No, it was simply a case of advice being tendered and the advice was accepted. Anyway they seem to be very sensitive here?

**Inspector:** They are quite sensitive, specially in Lahore.

**Q.** There are historical instances where Muhammadans have captured girls. What is the harm in that?

**A.** I don't really know. I have seen quite a number of Indian pictures and thought them quite unobjectionable.

**Q.** These objections arise on Indian films?

**A.** Yes, mostly.

**Q.** You get very few Indian pictures as it is and those few are subjected to this sort of sentimental objection?

**A.** And then they are usually banned in the Punjab.

**Q.** So any attempt to help the indigenous industry in that direction is bound to fail, if that sort of thing is to go on?

**A.** As it stands at present. If the present state of feeling between the two communities continues I don't think anything much can be done.

**Q.** You don't think much private effort will come forth?

**A.** They may make the pictures but they will not get the audiences.

**Q.** Or get it passed?

A. Probably.

Q. As regards Western pictures what is the complaint?

A. Well, Sir, as far as I know, the usual custom in the Punjab is if a film is banned, say, in Delhi, in the U. P.—previous to the Board being established the custom I think was that when the Punjab Government was informed that a certain picture had been banned they followed suit.

Mr. Green: Automatically? Without seeing the film?

A. Yes. Numerous films have been banned in other provinces and banned here. There has not been an opportunity for them to be shown.

Chairman: That is one rule. What is the other?

A. I see most of the pictures and if I find anything objectionable I make a report through my superior officer.

Q. I understand you are instructed by the District Magistrate as to what sort of thing you are to look out for.

A. We go on the same lines as the hints and instructions issued at Bombay. I use the Bombay instructions.

Q. That is all. Nothing different here?

A. No, Sir.

Q. Have you had many occasions to complain of Western pictures?

A. No, Sir. I have got a list of pictures we have complained about, if you like to see it.

Q. We have asked the District Magistrate to give us a list and the action taken. He has promised us the list. I daresay he will ask you for that. We will be satisfied with that. What is your opinion about Western pictures?

A. I think they are perfectly all right; there is nothing objectionable about them. Occasionally you come across, though I have not seen it for a long time, nude women and nude statues, which according to our instructions should not be permitted.

Q. But you think such cases occur very seldom?

A. Yes. Usually what I do is to bring the matter to the notice of the Manager of the cinema and he usually cuts it out. I have got a few here. One bit I remember I asked to be cut out which was done without any further trouble.

Q. So that you are able to exercise your moral judgment where you think that something should be omitted.

A. It happens very seldom but there had been cases before I took over this appointment.

Q. How long have you been in this appointment?

A. Nearly two years.

Q. I want to know what is your opinion, during the two years that you have been in the appointment, what is the general impression left in your mind—have you reason to complain of the nature of the films shown?

A. No, Sir, I have not.

Q. But for local conditions due to communal feelings and other things, you think that the censorship now adopted is adequate?

A. Well I would prefer that there should be one Central Board. Let me give you instances. Certain pictures passed by the Bengal Board have been banned in the Punjab. The agent or whoever is running the film will occasionally, after changing the name or having certain parts deleted, have the film passed by the Bombay Board. This means that this copy, as repassed, is not a banned picture any longer.

Q. You mean in such cases there should be a central board?

A. There should be one board.

Q. You want all films certified by one central board?

A. Yes; at some big centre.

Q. Say a centre like Bombay or Calcutta?

A. I should say it should be in Bombay.

Q. That is the port of entrance for most films?

A. Yes.

Q. After all when a film is passed by the Bombay Board there have been only about a dozen cases at the most—really six cases—in which the other provinces have differed from the Bombay Board. On the other hand, there is a certain amount of delay for people at Calcutta who want to exhibit their pictures before others.

A. That is why I say Bombay would be the best place. They could all come through one port.

Q. But the man importing a picture to Calcutta may and does want to exhibit it sooner than anybody else and it would be an inconvenience to the trade; unless the differences in the angle of vision of the various provinces are so acute that many films passed in Bombay would be rejected in Bengal, say. After all only half a dozen instances have come to light. I can understand where there is some difference the Central Board should advise; but in ordinary cases of censorship do you think it will be convenient to the trade if you require all films to be censored at one place?

A. I do not think it will affect the trade. They will know that the films are to be censored at one place and make arrangements to have them passed and distributed as soon as possible.

Q. Of course for local productions you will have a local board? Only for foreign productions you want a central board?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you think that on the central board there should be representatives of each province?

A. No; I don't think so; the Board ought to be fairly representative of all shades of opinion without that.

Q. In a city like Bombay you think you can get cosmopolitan views represented?

A. Yes.

Q. What is your idea, that each film should be inspected by two or more members of the Board, or is it enough in the first instance that a well paid officer should inspect them?

A. I think one officer would be sufficient, Sir; then he could bring anything to the notice of the Board.

Q. Do you think the present system adopted in Bombay is a good one?

A. I think so, Sir, because such an officer could give more time to it and go into it more thoroughly.

Q. And if he feels a doubt it should go before a committee of the Board?

A. Yes.

Q. But many people have urged that each film should be inspected by two members of the Board.

A. You can have two inspectors instead.

Q. You prefer paid agency for that?

A. Not necessarily.

Q. Because it is a sort of work that will require continuous work for four or five hours a day during the week. There is a good deal to be said in favour of that view of course.

A. Well, Sir, the members have their own work to attend to and cannot spend sufficient time on the examination of pictures.

Q. Then what do you want a local board in the Punjab for?

A. The only use for a local board is to examine locally produced pictures because there is a sufficient safeguard in the Act to prevent.....

Q. You mean the power of suspension vested in the District Magistrate?

A. Quite so.

Q. Before you make a report you generally consult some people?

A. I do. I try to get the views of other people.

Q. In the audience?

A. Yes, Sir.

Q. Have you had any occasion at all to report upon the moral laxity shown in any film?

A. No, Sir, but there have been cases before my time.

Q. But for the last two years you have not?

A. No, Sir. I do not think I have reported any case of moral laxity.

*Colonel Crawford:* I suppose you had in the province a definite system of inspection of all pictures before the Censor Board came into existence?

*Mr. Toms:* In 1922 the Local Government asked the Inspector-General of Police whether the local European Inspector could be detailed to do this work. In all big places there is an European Inspector who goes round informally and looks at the films.

Q. My point is, a film might have been passed in Bombay, but the objectionable portion might have been reinserted afterwards?

A. It is somewhat impossible to detect it in Lahore, because there is only one European Inspector who examines, in a somewhat informal way, these films. There is a change of programme twice a week, and if this one Inspector is to see all the 14 changes of programmes in one week, he will have to spend the whole of his afternoons and evenings in the theatres.

Q. How do you look at it from the police point of view? What I suggest is the possibility, and I believe it is one of your duties as a policeman, to see that no obscene pictures are shown?

A. We have a system, but it is not very satisfactory, because one Inspector cannot possibly be expected to examine so many films. There is also the Cantonment Inspector who is supposed to see the cinemas in the cantonment, and if it is brought to his notice that something objectionable is being shown in the cantonment cinema, he goes and sees it, but normally he does not visit the cinemas. We have got to rely to a certain extent on complaints from the public.

Q. Have you got any knowledge of the cinema in the mofussil in the Punjab?

A. No, except in Multan.

Q. Do you consider that the type of films shown in Multan is worse than the films shown in Lahore?

A. I don't think so, because it is the same film which goes round to the mofussil. Madams distribute the films.

Q. We have heard that what is called 'junk' in America—I mean films which are about 15 and 20 years old—are imported because of their cheapness, particularly for the mofussil, and I want to ask you if you have seen such films in the mofussil?

A. I have seen some very good films in Multan.

Q. What is the name of the Indian film to be shown on Saturday, do you remember?

A. No. But I think it is a love drama.

Q. Has it come to your knowledge, as a policeman, that there has been an increase in crime due to the cinemas?

A. No, I can't say that I have heard of any case like that.

Q. Most of the Indian films which have been banned have been banned largely on account of communal sentiment, is it not? That obviously is going to be a very serious handicap to Indian films if they are liable to be thrown out on account of communal feelings. To what extent do you consider, as a policeman, you should yield to this sentiment?

A. We rather regard it from the local state of communal feeling rather than from the point of view of the cinema, and if we find that a picture is likely to cause unrest and excitement, we would get rid of it rather than look to the feelings of the man who shows the picture or who produced the picture.

Q. Is that not likely to encourage objections until eventually no picture can be shown?

A. I think, from the point of view of law and order, it is better to be on the safe side and prevent the exhibition of any pictures which are likely to cause communal excitement and unrest.

Q. You say you are satisfied with the moral standard of the films shown to-day?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you consider the stories good or rubbish?

A. In the majority of cases the plot is quite good.

Q. You don't think there is any undue emphasis laid on sex films?

A. I don't think so. If any film like that comes here, we generally take notice of it.

Mr. Green: Talking about the difficulty of inspecting films and making sure that nothing has been put in afterwards, is it absolutely essential to see the film itself? Is it not sufficient if you look at the certificate?

A. We do not see the original certificate, we merely see a copy of it.

Q. Can't you insist on the original certificate? I say, subject to correction, that in Bombay no film is permitted to be exhibited unless the original certificate is shown?

A. That should be the case everywhere.

Q. Would it not be possible to insist on it here?

A. I have tried to see the original certificate, but I am always informed that the original certificate is kept at the head office and it is not sent round here.

Q. If you said that a particular film shall not be shown unless the original certificate is produced, then they are bound to show it to you, aren't they?

A. Yes, but it will delay matters.

Q. I put some emphasis on this, because having been an *ex-officio* member of a Board myself, we did greatly rely on the original certificate being shown, because if any excision is made full details are shown on the back of the certificate. It is very easy for the inspecting officers to find out that excision has been made and attention is called to it by means of a triangle. At any rate there is a distinctive mark on the certificate. I do not know if the Punjab rules are different. Perhaps if you insisted on seeing the original certificate, it would assist you in controlling the exhibition of films?

A. Certainly it would.

Q. I know the Bombay Board will issue a duplicate, so there is no difficulty in getting the original certificate. The rule says that a film without a certificate cannot be shown because unless you see the original certificate or even a duplicate copy of it, you cannot know whether the objectionable portion which has been cut out in Bombay has been re-inserted or not.

**Mr. Neogy:** Has there been any increase in the number of cinemas of late years?

**A.** As far as I know, one cinema has been closed down, but seven cinemas have been running for a long time.

**Q.** Do you find any difference in the quality of the pictures that are shown in the theatres owned by Madans and by others?

**A.** Madans have got the bigger concern, an they get very good pictures, and it is they who generally rent out pictures to most of the theatres.

**Q.** Supposing it were said that by reason of the fact that Madans own a large number of theatres the other cinema proprietors find it very difficult to get good pictures, you won't be in a position to support that?

**A.** Madans hire their pictures to other cinemas. First Madans themselves show the pictures in their own theatre, and then they hire them out to other people.

**Mr. Coatsman:** I would like the Superintendent of Police kindly to give us that handbill.

(The handbill was handed in to the Committee by the Superintendent of Police.)

**Chairman:** As a man of experience, would you like the cinemas to be extended or cut down in the country, because it is the only amusement that people have here.

**A.** A very small percentage of the poor people go to the cinemas. Most of the audience here consists of students.

**Q.** Take a place like Multan?

**A.** Cantonment stations are different, because mostly soldiers go to the cinemas there.

**Q.** My point is, do you consider it desirable that more cinemas should spring up in the country? I mean apart from the cinemas which show educational pictures, do you think it desirable that cinemas for the purpose of giving amusement to the people should be increased in the country?

**A.** I think cinemas have been opened in small places where they do a good deal of benefit to the people. But as far as Lahore is concerned, we know from first hand knowledge that no more cinemas are required here.

**Q.** You mean the extension of the cinemas would be desirable?

**A.** It won't do any harm.

### **Written Statement of Dr. R. C. RAWLLEY, Director of Industries, Punjab.**

In my opinion the most popular films with Indian audiences in this province and also in other parts of India are films depicting the religious life of the heroes of the ancient times. A well-known company (The Kohinoor Company) in Bombay prepared various films of this type and succeeded in capturing the local market. The majority of exhibitors in the City of Bombay and also in other large cities in India catered mainly for Indian audiences. Some of these films are readily available to exhibitors; but unfortunately they are of a very bad quality. In so far as my experience is concerned the films produced in India lack not only the historical detail but also the general effect. Photography, as a rule, is very bad and so is acting. More often than not modern furniture and surroundings are shown in films depicting life of the Hindus before the Christian era. In spite of the technical and historical defects the films are very popular, so much so that one cinema, "The Majestic Cinema" in Bombay, used to have half-a-dozen full houses in a day. On the other hand modern cinemas, such as those controlled by Messrs. Madan Theatres, Limited, of Calcutta, exhibit films suitable for Western audiences. The most successful Indian films produced in India were (1) "Krishna Janma", (2) "Jaidev", (3)

"Pati Bhakhti", (4) "Harish Chandra", (5) "Shakuntala", (6) "Dhru Bhagat" and (7) "The Light of Asia". It will be seen that in all these films the social life of the Hindus was intimately coupled with the religious life of the period in which the heroes lived. My own impression is that the uneducated classes attached more importance to the religious aspects of the subject of the film than to the technical and scenic effects. In certain cases I have seen ladies bowing before the hero on the film, showing a peculiar tendency to visualise the ancient gods.

2. In my opinion the present condition of the cinema industry in India is far from satisfactory. The greatest drawback is the lack of proper and financial organisation. This drawback prevents the producers from importing talent from abroad, with the result that almost all the films produced are technically wrong. As a matter of fact if the technical, by which I mean the photographic and scenic effects, were as good as they are in Western films Indian films would have much wider market than they do have at present. Some years ago an attempt was made by a Calcutta firm to export "Shakuntala" to America. As far as I remember the attempt ended in a failure, as the American exhibitors would not show those films on the American screen which are unsound from a technical point of view. In so far as distribution is concerned I am inclined to think that the present system is very defective. Continental films are distributed throughout India, Burma and Ceylon through their agent in Bombay, who is, as a rule, in touch with major exhibitors. Small cinema owners do not get the same facilities as the major ones do. In the case of the Universal Film Company's productions the agent in Bombay undertakes distribution on a commission basis. Here again I am told that there is a sort of monopoly existing at present. In so far as exhibition is concerned I cannot help condemning the present system. With very few exceptions the cinemas in India are badly equipped, badly managed and poorly served. There is a tremendous field for organised exhibition in the Punjab and I have every reason to believe that with proper organisation and financial backing the industry should go a long way in our province.

3. In so far as the supply of films is concerned the only aspect of monopoly which may be regarded as dangerous is the one referred to above, and that is the tendency on the part of major exhibitors to secure the best productions from American producers at exorbitant prices. In the exhibition of films there is undoubtedly a monopoly held at present by Messrs. Madan Theatres, Limited, of Calcutta. Some years ago (possibly in 1919), this company was converted from a private company into a limited liability company with a capital of one crore. Ever since then the Managing Agents have succeeded in acquiring theatres all over India and Burma. Barring one exception in Amritsar and two or three other exceptions in the Mofussil the monopoly of exhibitions is being held by this company in the Punjab. The obvious result of this monopoly has been the continuance of fabulous prices for seats in their theatres. If this monopoly continues for any length of time there is every likelihood of a still further increase in the price of seats. Another draw-back of this monopoly is that the small cinema owner in the Punjab is compelled to work under adverse conditions: he can neither secure the best films nor the best audiences.

4. The Amusement Tax is undoubtedly a handicap to the exhibitor, as it imposes an additional penalty on the members of the audience, thereby restricting the number of seats allotted to the first three classes of the theatre. The income derived by the owner from the first three classes is, as a rule, larger than the income derived from the two upper classes. Therefore any additional imposition reacts upon the number of cinema goers. The present Customs Tariff on imported films affects the exhibitors to the extent of the duty payable on the importation of films. The distributor by depositing 15 per cent. duty is entitled to a rebate at the time of re-exporting the film before the expiry of three years. This rebate is not given to the exhibitor, as the film passes through a large number of hands and no one knows on whom the incidence of taxation falls, but it must

be remembered that the distributor in the majority of cases gets a rebate. The indigenous production of films on sound technical lines should be encouraged in all parts of India, and in order to achieve that end a policy of "free trade" should be adopted in so far as the importation of "raw" films and other auxiliary materials is concerned.

5. I am of the opinion that the increased use of the cinema for educational purposes in schools and for adult education in agriculture, public health, industries, etc., by Government would help the growth of the film industry in the Punjab. There is a considerable demand for such films. I am convinced that no better medium than the film exists for educational publicity. In addition to creating an interest in subjects of a varied nature the cinema film helps in enabling the young boys in schools to form an idea of the technical nature of the various processes involved in agriculture and industry.

6. Conditions in the Punjab are very favourable to the development of an Indian film-producing industry on a large scale. In the first place the unstinted bounty of nature will enable the Punjab to afford facilities for scenic effects. We have on the one side the vast range of the Himalayas strewn as it is with river beds, forests and vegetation, and on the other side we have the vast expanse of the plains offering endless possibilities for filming subjects of religious and historical importance. In addition to the facilities afforded by nature we have the palaces, the gardens, the orchards and other artificial scenery in the Indian States where films of historical importance could be easily taken. The climatic conditions are also favourable for the development of a film-producing industry on a large scale.

7. I do not consider that there are in India at present producers, directors, actors, actresses and scenario writers of sufficient technical knowledge, enterprise, resource and adaptability on whom the country can depend for a substantial output of film of real competitive exhibition value, but this gap, as I have already mentioned, can easily be filled either by the importation of experts from abroad or by training our own men in this industry in those countries where the industry has already achieved considerable commercial success. I happen to know a good few Punjabis who have come back from the United States of America with a fairly good knowledge of the cinema industry and trade, but unfortunately as the field of employment is limited and as capital is lacking these men have had to remain in darkness so far. My own idea is that if the industry receives direct assistance and impetus from Government there will be sufficient capital in India for organising film production on a large scale. The general tendency of the people in the Punjab is to invest money in concerns which are likely to receive direct or indirect assistance from Government and I feel confident that if Government were to help the industry the people of the Punjab would come forward with their investments. The most suitable action that Government can take at this stage is to grant a substantial loan extending over a period of 10 or 20 years to a well-constituted and well organised limited liability company. Before granting the loan Government should see that the company represents all communities and all shades of opinion not only on the directorate but also in the shareholders themselves. Government could further assist the industry by awarding suitable scholarships to deserving Indian students to study all the technical aspects of the industry in England, the United States of America and Germany. I am of the opinion that expenditure by Government is justifiable as a good deal of gold bullion is now being exported to the United States of America in return for a heterogeneous lot of highly combustible films, which takes away a good deal from the economic wealth of the country.

8. India's participation in the Imperial Film Scheme would undoubtedly assist the development of her own film industry, as it would assist her in making herself better known and understood throughout the Empire and the world. As there will be a continuous production of good films in India there will be an automatic check on the importation of bad films from the



West. I regret I am unable to give any suggestions as to the methods of putting such a scheme into practice.

9. There is sometimes a tendency on the part of missionaries and other foreign tourists to spread invidious propaganda against India's customs and social traditions by showing slides of an undesirable character. It appears to me that this tendency could be checked with advantage if India possessed her own film industry. A central agency would undertake the task of exhibiting films which would give the members of the British Commonwealth an exact idea of the economic resources and of the habits of the people of India. I feel confident that almost all Provincial Governments would adopt measures which would enable the country to secure better recognition in other lands.

## PART II.

### *Social Aspects and Control.*

10. I consider that certain classes of films such as those depicting the violent extremes of sexual life in the West have a demoralising effect upon the public, in particular on young boys of impressionable age: but I must admit at the same time that there is no general circulation of immoral or criminally suggestive films. Since the institution of censorship in different provinces of India there has been a marked decrease in the importation of "sex" films or "crime" films. It is almost impossible to say as to whether there has been any increase of crime due to the cinema. My own opinion is that those classes of the community who are habitually inclined to commit crime do not ordinarily visit places of amusement or entertainment, and for this reason I am inclined to think that these classes cannot draw their inspiration from the films exhibited in large urban centres. The existing censorship is to my mind quite adequate for the protection of juvenile morality. It may be argued that the differences in social customs and outlook between the West and the East necessitate special consideration in the censorship of films in this country, but it must be remembered at the same time that the best features of Western life are in themselves of considerable educative value to the young mind. It would not serve any useful purpose at this stage to exclude the exhibition of social customs of the West in the East. The latest development in wireless telegraphy, wireless telephony and aerial communications are factors which must ultimately tend to make the world move towards a common social and moral goal. One cannot in the middle of the 20th century draw a rigid curtain across the East and the West. One cannot possibly establish a complete exclusion or a rigidly defined isolation between different races of the world. So far as I am aware no film has so far been exhibited in a public cinema which was likely to offend the religious susceptibilities of any class of the community, nor has there been a deliberate attempt on the part of any cinema proprietor to exhibit films likely to misrepresent Western civilization or to lower it in the eyes of the Indians. It is indeed too late at this stage to withdraw films of Western life from Indian cinemas, as the public, both educated and uneducated, are already in touch with the salient features of Western life for the last twenty years. I, for one, would not recommend the imposition of rigid restrictions on the exhibition of films depicting the social life of the Western nations.

11. I am not in favour of certification of certain films as "For adults only". Some years ago a London theatre put up a board on which the words "For adults only" were written. I think the play was entitled "Damaged Goods". It was a translation from a well-known French drama. As far as I remember the certification was not adhered to in actual practice. There is always a possibility on the part of the cinema proprietors to evade certification, but even if Government were to exercise control, they would soon find that the actual cost of enforcing rules would become a heavy burden on the tax-payer. I consider that censorship is an effective method of guarding against misuse of films, and I feel confident that if the members of a film censor board were conversant with the principles

of social psychology and were also familiar with fundamental ethical principles they would exclude films which are likely to affect the morals of the people from public exhibition. I do not believe in unduly interfering with the freedom required for artistic and inspirational development, and for this reason I advocate the adoption of a sane policy in so far as the censorship of films is concerned. I do not advocate the replacement of the present Provincial Board of Censors by a single Central Board, as it would be difficult for the latter to study in detail the requirements of the different provinces, and would also cause inconvenience to the trade. I would, however, advocate the institution of a Central Board of cinema development which would draw its funds from the central revenues and would give technical assistance to the trade in so far as the distribution, exhibition and taking of films is concerned. The central development board would no doubt keep in touch with the activities of the Provincial Boards of Censors and would act only in an advisory capacity. I must admit that I am not satisfied with the present construction of the Provincial Boards, of which at least 60 per cent. of the members are not conversant with the difficulties involved in the regulation of cinema trade and industry. I would certainly prefer a whole-time experienced officer as censor at each centre to be assisted by an advisory board of non-officials. The present system, under which films are ordinarily examined by inspectors subordinate to the Board, is far from satisfactory. In the first place these inspectors are not sufficiently well qualified for the work and in the second place they are likely to be influenced by the judgment of interested cinema proprietors. Inspectors must be conversant with the principles involved in scenario writing, and in the historical details of films, also with their photographic and general outlook and with the conditions governing the importation of films into this country. I might, however, suggest that in order to gain working knowledge of all these aspects of the industry the Inspectors will have to go through a prolonged training in foreign countries. As regards posters, handbills and advertisements of cinema performances I would suggest that these should be censored along with the films. I have never come across any such advertisements which were objectionable. In so far as the import and export of films is concerned, my own opinion is that it will have to be left to private enterprises, otherwise there will be a considerable amount of disturbance in the trade. I do not see the necessity of Government exercising any control over film production, as the subject-matter of such films would always be duly censored by the Provincial Board of Censors. Only those films will be exhibited which conform to the standards accepted by the Board.

**Oral Evidence of Dr. R. C. RAWLLEY, Director of Industries,  
Punjab, on Thursday, the 24th November 1927.**

*Chairman:* How long have you been Director of Industries?

A. I have been here for the last two years.

Q. Where were you before that?

A. Before that I was in Bombay.

Q. Doing what?

A. I was connected with the firm of Morarjee Gokuldas & Co.

Q. How long has the Industries Department been in existence in the Punjab?

A. For about seven years now.

Q. Are you in touch with the local film producing industry?

A. Yes, to a certain extent.

Q. How many film producing companies are there in this province?

A. I have come across, so far, only two firms.

Q. How long have they been in existence?

A. I have known them to exist since I have been here.

Q. What class of work do they turn out? Do they turn out work for public shows?

A. So far as my department is concerned, we have had the opportunity of getting some industries filmed.

Q. Do they make anything else?

A. Not that I know of.

Q. So it is for your department, for the Co-operative Department, for the Health Department and, probably, for the Education Department they turn out films. Did they come into existence for that purpose?

A. I think they were doing some sort of work before.

Q. How often have you given work to them?

A. Strictly speaking, we have had only one film made so far, and that is the hosiery industry in Ludhiana, and there were some topical films relating to the functions connected with His Excellency the Governor, when he opened some industrial institutes.

Q. You mean institutes indirectly bearing upon industries?

A. Yes.

Q. I suppose you have in mind the very large use of the cinema for your propaganda in connection with industries?

A. Yes.

Q. To familiarise the people with machinery, how to handle the machinery, how to handle the products and so forth. I suppose all these ideas you are going to spread by means of the cinemas?

A. We have put up a scheme which is still under consideration of the Government.

Q. What is your idea? Do you want to produce the films that you want?

A. So far as I am concerned, I believe in the organization of a central agency which would have experts on its staff, people who know not only how to produce films, but also to write suitable advertisements and weave stories connected with the life and traditions of the people, because purely industrial films will not be of much use. Mere lessons will not command the attention of the audience, whereas stories woven into a plot will appeal to the audience.

Q. You believe then in some central organization which will produce these public utility films apart from films which are used for amusement?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you think, left to private agencies, such public utility films are likely to be produced?

A. The private agencies cannot make a financial success of their concerns if they are not backed up by Government. My idea is that the central agency should be a sort of custodian of the Government films, and it should have a large number of operators and projectors so that we may indent upon that department to take suitable films at any time.

Q. Do you mean a central agency for each province or for all the provinces?

A. I am only talking of one province.

Q. You would prefer to have a provincial central agency for your province?

A. Yes.

Q. You think the provincial finances will admit of that?

A. Oh, yes, there is plenty of money.

Q. Of course, the Punjab has got a surplus budget and you can afford it, but I was only considering about the other provinces which cannot balance their budgets. In their case I thought it might be more useful if we had a central agency where all the provinces could pool their resources together?

A. I do not know if you have got my note, but I have pressed in that the desirability of a provincial agency which should have a sort of co-ordinating element with the central agency of the Government of India.

Q. What is the Government of India agency to do?

A. It is meant to co-ordinate the activities of the various provinces. Personally I feel that publicity and propaganda work has not been very satisfactorily handled in this province, and I should like it to be extended further.

Q. You think then it is the duty of the Government to provide publicity and instruction to the people?

A. Yes.

Q. You think it is a justifiable proposition that Government money should be spent for propaganda and instruction purposes?

A. I think so.

Q. The point which I wish to get from you is this. There are two or three difficulties that we feel in the matter, namely the financial resources of the Government and then the duplication of expert agencies. You would want expert scenario writers, camera men, technical men and so on for each province, which would mean so much money. So in such matters where expert assistance is needed, would you have a central agency to maintain such expert men till local experts are produced? I mean, till local men are trained by the imported experts, would you advocate that each province should send for its own expert or it is enough that the central agency sends for experts and maintains them and lends them out to provinces?

A. If you want to make propaganda effective through the medium of films, then each province will have to have its own experts, its own scenario writers, its own operators and camera men. The central agency in my opinion should act as a Board of co-ordination. That is to say, suppose we have produced certain films on Public Health here which could be used for exhibition purposes in Madras, then the Madras agency should apply to the central Board to get the loan of this film from the Punjab agency.

Q. You mean you want a central management rather than a central studio?

A. I want a central co-ordinating agency for management and distribution, and that is the only effective means of stopping duplication and re-duplication of the same films.

Q. But then it has been suggested by the Director of Public Health that unless the film produced in this province is given the provincial setting, with the Punjab people, with the Punjab dress and so on, it would not appeal to the Punjabis?

A. I should say that there is a certain amount of truth in that statement. That is what I also mean. If you want a concrete example I could mention the hosiery industry whose entire history depended upon the Kashmiri emigrants.

Q. Now, take a country where the hosiery industry is very well established and developed. Supposing you had a very good film made in Germany or in Switzerland or any other place, do you think it really matters to the people to follow the machinery and the method that the people shown there are Germans or Swiss?

A. Yes, it would matter to a certain extent.

Q. But if you show the Punjabi handling the modern machinery, it would not be true to life?

A. Oh, yes, the Punjabis do handle modern machinery. I think they handle modern machinery to a much greater extent than people in other provinces.

Q. You think that will be an additional factor to be taken into account, and that each province must produce its own films in its own setting and such a thing would appeal to the people more?

A. Yes.

Q. And you would have provincial agencies for this purpose with a central co-ordinating agency?

A. Yes.

Q. What are the subjects that you propose to deal with in this way? Have you formed any idea?

A. So far as my department is concerned, we have worked out the subjects and the details thereof. They are not contained in my report, because I merely adhered to your questionnaire. I have got a detailed scheme and I have put it up to Government.

Q. As regards the production of films for the amusement of the people, I suppose you consider that the Punjab is well suited for producing such films having regard to its mountain scenery, its borders, its local history and so on?

A. Yes.

Q. We have also been told by experts that Punjabis have got film value faces. But you think there is scope for the development of the Indian film industry?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you think that private agencies will come forward in this province?

A. I am afraid it is somewhat difficult to get the necessary capital in the Punjab.

Q. Have you got any scheme in your province to give financial aid to industries?

A. Yes, we have what we call the Industrial Loans Act.

Q. Is it working?

A. At present we have a provision of one lakh of rupees a year, and it is distributed among 10, 15 or 20 people. Very small amounts not exceeding Rs. 5,000 or so are lent to them.

Q. To how many industries have you given loans?

A. We have so far given money to a man manufacturing chalks and face powders, there is another man who has taken a loan and who is making calico prints, a third man is turning out hosiery goods, and a fourth man is doing weaving. In fact, we have given loans so far to what we may call cottage industries.

Q. How long has that been working?

A. The Act was passed in 1923, but it was more or less a dead letter till I took charge of the department.

Q. Do you find it easy to give loans to these people?

A. The securities demanded are rather stiff. We generally take one and half times worth of property in mortgage. That is to say, if a man wants a loan of Rs. 5,000, we take from him property on mortgage worth Rs. 7,000 or Rs. 10,000. We give long term loans redeemable in five or six years payable in annual instalments.

Q. You know that in Australia they give long term loans which are repayable in 20 or 30 years and in very easy instalments?

A. We might move in our Council to have a similar thing done here also.

Q. Do you think that the Punjab Government will go in for your scheme of aiding this industry?

A. I think they will.

Q. I think the terms are rather stiff under the Industries Loans Act.

A. Sufficient capital is not available. I don't suppose the Punjab Government will set aside 10 or 20 lakhs of rupees for aiding the industries.

Q. If they don't who will?

A. I should say that private capital ought to be forthcoming. After all, there is money in it.

Q. But not with this communal feeling?

A. I don't think there can be much communalism in business.

Q. We have heard just now that a film about a Moghul subadar kidnapping a girl was objected to on the ground that it would give offence to Muhammadans.

A. I have never come across a case like that.

Q. That is rather a great handicap to the industry.

A. To my knowledge there have been cases where films showing an Indian Raja is married to an English or a western girl have been proscribed in Bombay. But not to my knowledge in the Punjab.

Q. We have just heard it from the Inspector of Police. Now, you think that story-writers and scenario-writers are likely to be available here?

A. No, I am afraid not. There may be one or two perhaps.

Q. Have you got a system of scholarships?

A. Yes, we have two scholarships every year for study in western countries.

Q. Would you advocate the introduction of classes for training people in acting and scenario writing and all these things connected with the film industry? Would you advocate it?

A. Oh, yes. You see, the difficulties I anticipate would be in giving the requisite training here. I don't find anyone here who is capable of giving proper training.

Q. Supposing you had a studio for your own purposes, as you put it, for the purpose of producing educational and public utility films, would you have some experts on that? They could go to some school or college where they could give instruction in these matters? To this you would agree? You advocate such a system?

A. Certainly.

Q. And also scholarships paid to promising students who show a taste for that. You would advocate it?

A. I would.

Q. You have given us such a lucid statement, I don't think I should trouble you further. Which is your native district?

A. Sialkot.

*Col. Crawford:* I am very interested in what you say about having a central board for the production of films. I presume you would really want expert assistance for it. Have you any idea what an expert camera man costs?

A. I once wanted to engage one myself a few years ago before I took to Government service and I was quoted a thousand rupees a month.

*Chairman:* From where?

A. A man from England.

Q. Did you try Germany?

A. No, I didn't. As a matter of fact this project of mine never materialised.

*Colonel Crawford:* We were given a figure from £30 to £50 a week for a man whom you may call an expert, a man who really was an expert.

A. Those are top-rate men. Even in London, I might tell you, I was associated with one or two films on the financial side. The camera man was getting £20 a week. Of course, there are men and men. Real good high class experts would not come out to this country at all. There is plenty of work for them in America and England.

Q. They would not come out unless you paid them. We understand the British film industry is inferior to the American in technique at least, and,

as regards photography and so forth, Germany is the most advanced country. Have you any idea what a director would cost, a man who could put your story together and put it on the screen?

A. I am afraid I would not like to name a figure at all.

Q. The figure quoted to us was about £500 a week.

A. But even for that money you may not get the right sort of man.

Q. But have you any idea what a studio with first class equipment, the latest equipment, would cost?

A. My figure was 15 lakhs of rupees. That covered a studio somewhere near Poona for an area of about 100 acres of land.

Q. Including cost of land? So far as we understand the actual cost of a studio with all the latest cameras, lighting equipment, would be about £10,000.

A. And you have got to have all your scenes worked in.

Mr. Green: That would be working capital?

A. I don't think so because there are certain permanent features which should be introduced in practically all kinds of films. Those I would debit to the capital expenditure side.

Colonel Crawford: I would not pursue it further but on the whole if you were to get a really first-class studio erected out here and spared no expense as regards the staff you employ, it would probably be beyond the capacity of any one province?

A. It all depends upon what particular line of films you are going to take.

Q. You are producing first-class public utility films?

A. Public utility films will not be so expensive as amusement or historical films. That is the actual cost of production of any particular film without counting your actual charges. A studio of the type you described just now for £10,000 would be good enough for my purposes, for industrial films.

Q. We understand it is the utmost charge for the very best studio built in America, not counting land. That is, the actual cost of building the studio with all the latest appliances for photography, lighting, printing, developing and everything. I only want to put it to you, you have rather gone on the lines that you must have a provincial studio. It seems to me it might be beyond the purse of a provincial government. On the other hand, if there are nine provinces equally as anxious to produce public utility films and they were to pool their resources, you could get undoubtedly a very fine central studio well within the money available, capable of taking any work up which you ask of it. Would you have any great objection to that?

A. Well, in so far as the Punjab is concerned, my own opinion is that the Punjab must have a studio of its own, because the natural conditions here, the climatic conditions, the landscape and other facilities which nature has given to us, are entirely different from those in Calcutta or in Madras or in Bombay.

Q. But your staff and your cameras, etc., are not fixed to the ground, they can go by train. There is nothing to prevent you from taking your characters to the central studio and putting up the requisite setting inside the studio.

A. No.

Q. I am rather interested in a statement you make in your evidence about Madans' monopoly being definitely damaging to the trade. You think that is a fact?

A. So far as my knowledge goes I think it is a fact.

Q. We understand Madans only hold two theatres here.

A. There are only two good theatres here as a matter of fact, the Excelsior and the Elphinstone.

Then you have got the Burt Institute which belongs to the railway authorities. I think there is only one cinema besides.

**Q.** Still, you are inclined to think that the effect of the monopoly is disadvantageous to the industry as a whole?

**A.** Yes, it is.

**Q.** Have you any suggestions as to how you could prevent such monopoly?

**A.** I am afraid I have no particular suggestions to make at present. Because, after all, there is no possibility of introducing legislation which will stop these monopolies.

**Q.** Well now, I notice you are keen on the development of the film industry in the Punjab and you think it has great opportunities. You point out that films have a provincial boundary so to speak, what in fact you call a film stage in the Punjab surroundings. Have you a sufficient market for such films if produced in the Punjab?

**A.** Of a particular type.

**Q.** Yes, of a type suited to your needs.

**A.** Yes, there is a sufficient market in the Punjab for this.

**Q.** What number of cinemas have you at present?

**A.** I am afraid I cannot give you exact figures.

**Q.** We understand from Government figures there are 28 in the whole of the Punjab.

**Mr. Green:** Half of them are at Lahore and Rawalpindi.

**Colonel Crawford:** Your film industry cannot thrive on 28 cinemas; you have got to find a market.

**A.** It doesn't mean there is no room for expansion. People are getting more and more used to the cinemas. I have seen an open air cinema at Montgomery.

**Mr. Green:** Charging what prices?

**A.** Anything from 2 annas to 4 annas; and with their own small equipment they make a fair amount of profit.

**Colonel Crawford:** Have you any idea what size town as regards population would carry a cinema?

**A.** I don't think it depends on the size so much as on the quality of the population.

**Q.** Yes, to some extent.

**A.** Our general experience is that a cinema could serve 50,000 people.

**Q.** Working year in, year out?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Are there many towns like that in the Punjab?

**A.** I don't think so. There are not many towns with a population of 50,000 and there are towns in other parts of India, much smaller towns, that have got cinemas.

**Q.** All the year round?

**A.** That I could not say because I never went into the question.

**Q.** Because a travelling cinema takes its programme along, so again it does not get much market.

**A.** It is very difficult to say because there are 30 or 31 districts in the Punjab. And I think the majority of these districts could have a cinema.

**Mr. Green:** But a paying cinema?

**A.** That depends on the organisation. Even Madans have sustained losses from time to time. Everything, in my opinion, depends on good organisation. If a man knows how to run his business he is bound to make a profit.

**Col. Crawford:** You suggest Madans have made a profit. Do you know what dividends they have paid?

**A.** That, I am afraid, is a question of general financial interest.



*Mr. Green:* I want to clear my mind of one or two statements in your recommendations. I gather from you that Indian films are not popular. Or rather you say "Indian films are readily available but unfortunately of a very bad quality". We have had it in evidence from other parts of India that even a bad Indian film is very popular and more paying than a western film. You cannot support that in this province?

*A.* Well, I have mentioned that they are popular. You see, the photography as a rule is very bad and so is the acting, but still they are popular. I mean religious films in particular.

*Q.* We have also had evidence to-day that not many Indian films are shown in Lahore.

*A.* I don't know about Lahore but I have seen Indian films in Amritsar.

*Q.* Can you tell me where they were made?

*A.* The two films that I once saw were made in Bombay.

*Q.* Were they popular there?

*A.* Very popular.

*Q.* Were those historical or modern dramas?

*A.* Historical—"The Birth of Krishna."

*Q.* Have you seen any of the modern social dramas on the screen in this province?

*A.* No, I have not.

*Q.* In paragraph 4 of your statement you refer to the fact that an importer of films, though he pays duty, may get a rebate or drawback of  $\frac{1}{2}$  on that duty. You are aware, I take it, that there is a provision in the Sea Customs Act to prevent drawbacks from being obtained unless the article is worth the duty,—to prevent, obviously, an article that is worn out and of small value getting back the duty paid on it. A film that has been circulated through India must have had considerable wear and tear. I take it. Do you know for a fact, (I am asking for information), whether many of these are re-exported?

*A.* Some of them are, I think. Of course, this particular statement is based upon my experience in 1921—that one could pay the duty on a film and then after that get a rebate on it on re-exporting it.

*Q.* Legally speaking, to that extent it is perfectly true, but I want to know whether you have verified your impression by referring to figures.

*A.* No, I have not.

*Q.* In paragraph 7 you talk of a good deal of gold bullion exported to the United States of America in payment for films supplied. You don't mean that as a literal fact?

*A.* No, I used it in the ordinary sense.

*Q.* You don't object to international trade as such?

*A.* No, I don't, certainly not.

*Q.* You suggest in the last paragraph of your reply that the central board of cinema development should be financed from central revenues.

*A.* When replying to the Chairman I spoke of a central board of co-ordination.

*Q.* The Central Board of Development you call it—to provide funds from central revenues. Apart from the question of its constitution—whether it is not more a provincial subject—do you think that the Governments in India have not a better use for their funds?

*A.* Well, I think this is also one of the best uses.

*Q.* At present the theory is that the board of censors should be financed by the trade. They charge so much for inspecting a certain length of film and at any rate in Bombay and Calcutta the boards work without Government assistance. Do you think it would be advisable, if you wish to have a central board of development, that the trade itself should finance it, possibly in the form of an extra cess?

A. It comes to the same thing. When you are levying a cess, you are taking it from the pockets of somebody. Then it comes from the central revenue without any particular trade feeling the pinch of it.

Q. But there have been examples of particular industries willingly subjecting themselves to a cess for the purposes of development, research and so on. Such as tea, jute, lac and so on. Isn't that a fairer method of financing development such as you suggest?

A. Yes, if it is based on the question of equity I have no objection to that.

Mr. Neogy: In paragraph 5 of your note, you express the opinion that its increased use for educational and industrial purposes would help the growth of the film industry in the Punjab. How is this result to be brought about under your scheme?

A. Under my scheme the central agency that I have proposed to Government does not actually deal in the manufacture of films. The central agency employs private firms to take particular subjects. These subjects are financed by this agency on behalf of the various departments concerned, and this agency acts more or less, as I have pointed out before, as a custodian of government films.

Q. But I think in reply to certain questions that were put to you by other members, you stated that you would not mind if Government were to take up even the manufacture of films. Perhaps I am mistaken. That was the impression that I gathered.

A. My whole argument is that with a central agency the convenience would be that instead of each department having to store their own films and to provide their own camera men and projectors and operators, this central agency would have a certain staff.

Q. It would receive the indents so to speak from the different departments? And it would distribute these to the private manufacturing companies and store them again and send them out on requisition?

A. Yes, and scrutinise them and so on.

Q. Then you refer to some Punjabis who have come back from the United States of America with a fairly good knowledge of the cinema industry and trade. In what capacity are they engaged just now?

A. They are at present carrying on their own small business.

Q. In this line?

A. Yes.

Chairman: Exhibition or production?

A. Production.

Mr. Neogy: In which branch of production have they trained themselves?

A. One man is a photographer and he has taken a number of films from time to time for various departments of the Punjab Government.

Q. Are you satisfied with the quality of his work?

A. Yes, I am.

Q. Would you be prepared to engage him, or for the matter of that any man of the same qualification, for government work?

A. I am afraid I would not commit myself to anything definite on that point.

Q. What I mean is this. Is it absolutely necessary for you to get experts out from America or Germany? Or would you be prepared to depend upon the services of these men you have got at present?

A. I am sure I could depend upon the services of these men, because I have seen the films produced by them which are quite as good as any imported.

Q. So far as camera work goes, you don't think there is any need for foreign experts at present.

A. We may require them to improve the conditions further. But these men who have had their training are in my opinion quite suitable for India.

**Q.** And in what other branches have you got men trained?

**A.** Well, I know a man who knows scenario writing and can work out historical details for a film.

**Q.** These are the two branches in which some people have got themselves trained at their own expense?

**A.** Yes.

*Chairman:* Do you mean Mr. Shorey?

**A.** Yes.

**Mr. Neogy:** Now, supposing there was a central government studio for the whole of India located in some place in the Punjab, Bengal or Bombay, and supposing all government work were to be executed with the help of this studio, would that be a feasible proposition from your point of view?

**A.** In my opinion it would not be. I am myself very much against concentration through centralisation of that type.

*Chairman:* On principle?

**A.** Yes, on principle.

**Mr. Neogy:** Now, regarding the various kinds of films which you have mentioned in your note, government propaganda films more or less, what proportion of the pictures do you think have to be taken in the open air and not in studios? Would it be a very large proportion?

**A.** I should say the majority of the films have to be taken in the open air. But then there are processes which must be done inside also—such as the filming of certain mechanical appliances.

**Q.** And from that point of view, the central studio of whatever excellence would not be very helpful, having regard to the large proportion of films which have to be taken in the open air?

**A.** No.

**Q.** Now then, with regard to these scenes which have to be taken in the studio, as you lay some stress on local setting, would it not be rather difficult for you to take your men and women down, say, to Bombay, or any other part of India, where the central studio may be located and get artificial scenes prepared there and get your pictures produced? Would it not be a disadvantage and would it not add to the cost also?

**A.** Quite certainly.

**Q.** Now coming to paragraph 8 of your note, I find you think that India's participation in the Imperial films scheme would undoubtedly assist the development of her own film industry, that it would assist her in making herself better known and understood throughout the Empire and the world. I don't know how by the process of making India better known and understood throughout the Empire and the world, the Indian film industry can be assisted.

**A.** In this way: that the larger the scope of the activities, the greater is the encouragement given to the industry. If we exchange films, say, with Australia, Canada and New Zealand and get theirs in return, naturally there will be an additional impetus given to our own industry.

**Q.** But are you sure that films of the quality that are being produced in India now would have any market value outside India?

**A.** I am not sure that they would have much market value but I am depending upon the future development in this line too.

**Q.** So I take it that your opinion on this particular point is conditional on India attaining an international market value for her films?

**A.** Yes, you are right there. But still there are certain films which have been sent abroad.

**Q.** America does not form part of the Empire.

*Chairman:* That is rather an interesting fact.

**A.** Certain Indian topical films have been sent to America and been accepted by the American importers here. We have had here the Viceroy's visit

and we have had certain functions in the state of Mandi and the state opening of the Khyber Railway.

*Q.* You mean exchange?

*A.* No, they paid cash for these films.

*Mr. Neogy:* Now, when Indian films attain an international market value of their own, need we depend upon any artificial arrangement like Imperial preference to secure a market for them?

*A.* I am afraid I have not given much thought to this particular problem.

*Chairman:* That is a question of policy which would rather appeal to the politician. Don't trouble him with it.

*Mr. Coatsman:* I take it that your opinion is that the development of the industry must be left to private enterprise?

*A.* Not necessarily. I do not mean to say entirely to private enterprise. Official encouragement is necessary, either direct or indirect.

*Q.* But that can only be a stimulus to private enterprise? It cannot take the place of private enterprise?

*A.* Ultimately all industries must rely upon their own resources to exist.

*Q.* So in your opinion the film industry is in the same position as any other industry?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Now, you know the Shorey Company in Lahore?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Is any part of their capital derived from public subscription? Using the term in the sense of subscribing to a loan?

*A.* It is.

*Q.* Then have producing companies in the Punjab, or Lahore at any rate, good chances of getting public money?

*A.* It all depends upon the securities they can offer to government.

*Q.* Have you given any loans out of your grant to any cinema company?

*A.* Yes. Only one company so far,—the Shorey Studio.

*Q.* Have you had any other applications?

*A.* Yes. There was one application but not supported by any securities at all.

*Q.* You demand securities?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* For the full value of the loan?

*A.* More than the full value of the loan.

**Oral Evidence of Mr. H. R. STEWART, F.R.C., Sc.I., D.I.C., N.D.A., Director of Agriculture, Punjab, on Thursday, the 24th November 1927.**

*Chairman:* I dare say you are interested in the film industry so far as your department is concerned?

*A.* Very much.

*Q.* You believe in the great possibility of educating the agricultural population by means of the film?

*A.* Yes, there is a very great possibility.

*Q.* And you think there is great need for it?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* And your Government is now realising the importance of the subject and is taking steps to introduce the film as a means of education?

A. So far as agriculture is concerned, we get a budget allotment for the purpose now.

Q. How much do you get?

A. My budget allotment this year is Rs. 10,000. We are just beginning. We have got our own demonstration cinema lorry and we have recently purchased our equipment for taking films ourselves. The budget allotment for this year does not include the cost of the lorry, equipment, and so on which we have already got.

Q. You mean you have got equipment for producing films?

A. Yes.

Q. Have you got a camera man?

A. We have not got the staff yet. We have just recently got the cinema with the apparatus.

Q. You propose to start a studio of your own as it were?

A. We propose to take some films ourselves.

Q. That would require development, printing, editing and all that?

A. Yes. We have, as far as developing, printing and so on is concerned, —at the Agricultural College at Lyallpur—we have a good photographic section. We have been doing a lot in the last 2 or 3 years in the production of lantern slides for our own district demonstration staff, for the Education Department and for any other Department that wants slides. For instance, last year we turned out over 8,600 lantern slides on agricultural subjects. That is for the last financial year. Since the first of July this year we have turned out 4,500 slides. We are developing our photography section and extending our demonstration by films now.

Q. We saw a picture produced by the Railway I think for this Government called Rural Reconstruction.

A. That is a G. I. P. Railway film.

Q. It has been produced for your Government they told us?

A. I am not aware of it.

Mr. Green: They said: with the co-operation of the District Magistrate, and certain others. I do not think they said for the Punjab Government.

Chairman: They were going to show it to the Governor before exhibiting it to the public.

A. I do not know that.

Q. You think you will be able to produce both plot and technique?

A. We have had up to the moment five films made for us. We have not attempted anything by way of plot or story. The first film we made was one showing the development of machinery and implements, beginning with the ordinary country plough and so on working up gradually to the tractor, but we have not attempted to weave it into in any plot. They were simply a continuous record of development. Similarly we have had operations connected with horticulture shown on the film, but we have not introduced into any of them anything in the nature of a plot.

Q. Of course, it is your intention to do so? I have read about it in the film books that they command the greatest attention when you introduce it in a plot.

A. Yes, they do. If you have a long programme of purely instructional films I think you will require something to amuse people occasionally. I have seen agricultural films worked into a plot. For instance a firm selling artificial manures,—nitrate of soda,—have produced films and they have a story.

Q. I have seen one on potatoes?

A. We have not attempted anything of that nature here so far.

Q. I suppose you intend to develop this part of demonstration by films?

A. Very much so.

Q. You think that each provincial Government should be left to itself to do so, or should a central agency be created for the purpose?

A. There are difficulties in the way of a central agency. I think the Punjab man at any rate prefers a film with Punjabi characters, and owing to the variety of things that have to be worked in for the whole of India, I think it is a matter for the Local Governments.

Q. The only point was about finance, otherwise it is an excellent idea. Reduplication of work, financial inability of certain provinces and so on. Moreover I suppose you want co-ordination in the work of the departments in the various provinces. I dare say you will be able to gather some of these things from Madras, and Madras will be able to gather some things from the Punjab?

A. Undoubtedly, but I think the conditions are so vastly different between, say, the north of India and the south of India that things that are applicable in one place would not suit the other.

Q. Were you here when the Director of Industries was giving his evidence about a co-ordinating agency?

A. I was present but I could not hear properly.

Q. His idea is that each province should produce its own films, but for distribution and other things each Government may indent upon a central agency which will co-ordinate the work of the various Local Governments as a sort of library from which distribution will take place. Is that a matter which you would like to consider?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you think that anything should be done by the Central Government in the direction of developing your scheme for agricultural demonstrations and so on?

A. I do not think that you are likely to get private firms to go in very much for these instructional and educational films. I think for the present at any rate it is a matter for Government. I think they will have to produce such films for the present.

Q. You believe in the Government themselves producing these films, developing them, printing them, editing them and so on?

A. I think at the present moment there is no demand on the part of the public for such films, and you will not get commercial people to take them up.

Q. Have you studied what they do in Germany in this matter?

A. I understand in Germany, France, America and other countries the Central Government does actually produce and distribute and have free shows of educational and instructional films. I think some similar system will have to be followed here.

Q. At any rate there may be some films of those countries which may be usefully exhibited here also?

A. That is quite so. For instance, in addition to the films we have made locally, we have purchased a good number of American films.

Q. In such a matter, instead of each Government buying its own films, would it not be a benefit if one central agency were to buy such films and distribute them to the provinces?

A. In the case of imported films, yes.

Q. That would be a better method?

A. Yes.

Q. In all departments of public health, agriculture, industries, machinery and all that—in all those cases that can be done?

A. Anything of an imported nature can, but in agriculture I feel that production must be a local function. For instance, if one is taking a film of any particular crop, he can only take a little piece of it to-day, a little piece of it next week, or next month and so on. It will have to be done in pieces.

**Q.** For instance, if you want to show them how to plant orchards, you do not mind showing them the way in which they do it in Canada, Australia and so on?

**A.** It is of educative value to show it to them.

**Q.** I have seen some of the orchards in Australia and it was most instructive to see how they do it. If you have to write a plot or story on your demonstration, do you think you have sufficient talent in your department?

**A.** No.

**Q.** You will require some trained men?

**A.** One would require some one with experience in it. Probably the most economical method would be to have one man for all the departments of Government.

**Q.** Both in the matter of direction and also in the matter of story writing you would require assistance, at any rate, to train people for a time, if not for ever?

**A.** There is no particular difficulty as far as I can see in actual photographing. We can do that ourselves. With our own camera we can, if necessary, supply the pictures and let the story be worked up.

**Q.** The story has to be worked up before the films are taken?

**A.** Yes. We can, of course, give the story.

**Q.** I dare say you will give the idea and an imaginative man will find a plot for it?

**A.** At the moment we do not contemplate anything by way of a plot.

**Q.** It is because, I suppose, of the financial difficulties, and not because ..

**A.** Up to the present we have confined ourselves simply to giving a record to the public of the difference between good and bad methods and so on.

**Q.** Have you got agricultural schools and colleges here?

**A.** We have one Agricultural College for the province, and we have nothing in the nature of what you might call an agricultural school. But in co-operation with the Education Department, in vernacular middle schools, rural science and agriculture is taught.

**Q.** Do you think that will be a suitable place for some training in this also, film camera work and all that?

**A.** You mean in the production of films?

**Q.** Yes?

**A.** I do not think so.

**Q.** You do not think agricultural schools or colleges can tackle it?

**A.** No.

**Q.** Or would you give scholarships to promising youths in your department to go and learn the art abroad, say, in Germany or America?

**A.** I do not think that there is a demand for such education at the moment.

**Q.** For your own work. Your object is to produce your own films, edit them, print them and all that?

**A.** It will be of great assistance to us if we have a man with training.

**Q.** I suppose your Government will find necessary funds if you find a suitable man to be sent. What I want is, do you think the Government of India should come to your assistance?

**A.** I think the local Government is capable of dealing with it.

**Q.** But I dare say you will require the assistance of research institutes, like Pusa or the Coimbatore College, for the results of the experiments to be shown in your demonstrations?

**A.** Yes. They have produced films at Pusa also.

**Q.** It appears to me that there is dissipation of energy in that when one department is producing films, you should be producing films here which are of common use and of common benefit?

A. They would be of common benefit, but they are not quite identical. The conditions of cultivation, let us say, in the canal irrigated area here, are quite different from those, say, at Pusa.

Q. I suppose you have seen irrigation in the south, in the Cauvery delta or the Godavari area?

A. I have not gone farther south than Poona.

Q. So you want a provincial agency to produce provincial films and a central agency to buy foreign films and produce things which are of common importance to the whole of India? That would be an ideal organisation for your department?

A. Yes.

Mr. Neogy: When you say that agricultural and other propaganda films must, to start with, be produced by Government, that is to say, the Local Government, do you mean to say that the actual production should be done departmentally?

A. I mean the financing of it should be done by Government.

Q. The actual work may be entrusted to a private agency?

A. Provided you can get a good private agency.

Q. You have no objection to that?

A. None at all. If there is a good agency forthcoming.

Mr. Green: A considerable amount of evidence has been tendered to us showing that various departments under various Governments are all taking up this question of making educational, agricultural and co-operative films. None of them so far seem to have any very large funds. You yourself say you have in the present budget only Rs. 10,000, that is, less than Rs. 1,000 a month. Have you actually made films yourself so far?

A. I think I am correct in saying that we have started.

Q. Have you estimated the cost of producing a positive?

A. From the information given me by the Principal of the College at Lyallpur a few days ago, allowing for 25 per cent. wastage, they have calculated they can turn out first copies at six annas a foot, and subsequent copies they have placed at three annas.

Q. It will be interesting to see how that forecast works out, because we have received evidence that commercially it costs Re. 1-8-0 to produce the first copy. A film of 8,000 feet or so costs anything like from Rs. 10,000 to Rs. 20,000. We were given an instance by the State Railways. They reckon they cannot supply a copy of a film under five annas and that is at a sacrifice and they can never do it for any one other than Government departments.

A. I have no data for actual work. We have only recently started, but I have just had a letter from the Principal in whose charge the outfit is. I have before me the letter from him in which he places the cost per foot for the first copy at roughly six annas, (this figure includes 25 per cent. for wastage) and for subsequent copies, three annas a foot.

Q. Even if we took the six annas per foot, you would be able to produce 25,000 feet in the year, which is approximately six hours' exhibition. The point I am getting on to is this. You cannot do very much on your budget grant as it stands at present?

A. Yes, but I have no doubt the Government will increase the budget grant as soon as we are ready to go in for the work which we have set before us.

Q. For your department as well as others?

A. Undoubtedly.

Q. Do you contemplate that the total amount allotted by Government for such work would ever enable you to start a central studio in the province in which each department can produce films with technical assistance?

A. I think that the most economical way of doing it is to have some central specialised staff to guide the departments.



**Q.** The departments, as you have already suggested, would say what they wanted to teach, and the technical staff would help to make the tale, to edit the film as well as to aid the stage managing and directing?

**A.** That is what is required.

**Q.** May I take you one step further? If all the provinces in India co-operated, one could undoubtedly afford a very much better staff. I know your difficulty. Your difficulty is that the Punjab conditions must be reproduced, and I quite agree and we have had other evidence to that effect. Are you aware of the amount of work that can be done actually in studios now? I take the point that you raise about photographing a crop in different stages of its existence. I cannot speak with authority, but I think we have heard enough to say with confidence that that can be done not by visiting the crop every few days, weeks or months, but by reconstructing your field in the studio and showing the crop in different stages. Probably it would be very much better than having your man go out at different times to a particular field? If that is a feasible proposition that might overcome your difficulty in regard to a central studio?

**A.** I have no experience, but I feel that it is difficult to reproduce nature in a studio satisfactorily.

**Q.** I take it you consider the technique of American films is usually very good?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Are you aware that we have it on expert authority that no film is taken now merely by sunlight, they have a lorry with a powerful generator to modify and assist the sunlight, and that more and more is being done in the studio itself? I am only quoting this as an instance. We were told of a big film produced by one of the big American companies dealing with Venice, where the Venice Grand Canal is reproduced very finely, the whole of it, in a studio. If the technique is so far advanced as that, would not this idea of a central studio with the co-operation of all Local Governments, a first class studio, in which each province can get its own provincial idiosyncrasies reproduced—would not this assist you a great deal?

**A.** If you can produce pictures true to life.

**Q.** If they could be got true to life, you consider it might prove a solution of your difficulty?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Have you seen the G. I. P. Railway films?

**A.** I have not seen them personally. I made an arrangement with the G. I. P. Railway to lend us some films. They have lent their films which have been shown at Lyallpur and elsewhere. I have a report on the subject from the Principal.

**Q.** They were popular?

**A.** The Principal said that the farmers of the Punjab are more advanced than those of the places where these films were taken. These were not taken in the Punjab I understand. I am informed that with the exception of a few hundred feet taken at the Palwal show in the Gurgaon district the remainder was taken in another province.

**Mr. Neogy:** Do you think that faked pictures taken in a studio would serve as a better propaganda than pictures taken in actual life?

**Mr. Green:** If actual life could be sufficiently reproduced?

**A.** No, unless you can reproduce scenes true to life.

**Mr. Neogy:** Supposing the agriculturist comes to know that these pictures were not actually taken in the farm but they were only faked pictures, would not that affect their enthusiasm? Would it not have a detrimental effect?

**A.** It should have a detrimental effect.

**Mr. Green:** If they came to know.

*Mr. Neogy:* So you will have to keep it secret from them?

A. Yes.

\* *Colonel Crawford:* I am very interested in what you say. Do you think that there would be sufficient work in the Punjab alone to occupy the necessary staff to produce decent films. It is no good denying that the films produced by the Department to-day are amateurish compared to what can be done?

A. Undoubtedly.

Q. That is a waste of money because very often the effect of a film is blurred by the bad photography. Do you think if you were to set up a staff in the Punjab you could have enough work for it?

A. For some considerable time.

Q. How many films do you think they could produce?

A. I cannot say, I have no experience.

Q. It is quite possible you would not find enough work to keep them occupied all the time; but what about a central studio?

A. I suggest that what we might call the highly specialised staff might work for all departments.

Q. You mean all departments in the Punjab, not only yours?

A. I consider that there is sufficient material to engage them for a considerable time.

*Mr. Green:* And sufficient finance?

*Colonel Crawford:* It does seem to me possible that provided you can get your work done in a central studio and done according to your specification, according to your requirements, it might be the best way to start in the first instance, when there won't be very much money available and later on to go in for developing provincial studios?

A. If film production is extended I think that the amount that would be required by the various departments all combined together would come to a considerable sum and that there would be a lot of work for some time.

\* *Chairman:* The province will be able to find it?

A. Yes.

*Colonel Crawford:* It only strikes me that the cost of expert staff worth employing would be high, it seems to me quite possibly beyond the pocket of any one provincial Government; but if all provincial Governments joined together it may be possible, you could undertake the work of your province of a first class quality and at the same time train men who could be used and developed for your provincial studios later on?

A. That is so, provided that staff is available for you at the time you require it. It is much easier to get a technical staff at the moment you require it if that staff is provincial than if it is central.

Q. I agree with you. If you have got the money and the work the provincial studio is the thing we should go for. But if that cannot be done in the first instance do you think that a central studio would be a stepping stone of value?

A. Yes.

Q. It seems to me particularly so in your department. The Chairman asked you a very obvious question just now. I do not know what the report of the Agricultural Commission will be, but I believe we will see provincial jealousies working there and that the discoveries made by one province are not known to other provinces, that the distribution is poor and that a central agency would help there?

A. A central agency would undoubtedly help distribution; only our productions in the Punjab are not applicable in every case to every other part of India.

**Q.** It is very possible that some of your methods which have been successful here, might be tried and found to be successful in other provinces?

**A.** There are many such cases where it is so. At present some of our methods are adopted in various other provinces.

**Q.** For instance, I fancy the Dairy Farm at Pusa is an example to the whole country to some extent?

**A.** Dairying is a subject which is pretty much alike all over the country.

**A.** Arable farming is very different according to the condition of irrigation.

**Q.** I recognise the difficulty but it is quite possible even from the Agricultural Department point of view that central work for them might be beneficial, provided always that one's provincial necessities are satisfied. Could you let us have figures? You say you have already produced five films and you bought a certain amount of films. It would be of use to know what your Department has spent during the past 5 years on films and on visual instruction generally?

**A.** So far as films are concerned, it is only, I think, a matter of about a year since we started doing anything.

**Q.** Could you get the figures without much trouble to you?

**A.** Yes, we shall send them to you.

**Q.** Expenditure on film production including all your capital expenditure up to date?

**A.** That I could give to you at the moment, I have it in front of me. On film production, actually we purchased a  $1\frac{1}{2}$  tons International chassis, with a projector, generating plant, etc. We fitted it up in our own workshop, and the total cost was Rs. 12,000. That includes everything complete. It was fitted up a year and a half ago. Since then the price of motors has fallen a great deal and probably the price will be less to-day. Regarding what we have actually paid for films I can find that out for you. We have purchased several American films. They are quite cheap.

**Q.** Any information like that you can give us will undoubtedly be of use to us and later on it may be of use to other people.

**Mr. Neogy:** Have the other provinces ever made enquiries about your films?

**A.** Quite recently we have had enquiries about the cost of our cinema demonstration lorry and what it consists of, equipment, etc.

**Chairman:** Was it from Madras?

**A.** I speak from memory, but I think Bengal was one province. We have had two enquiries.

**Mr. Neogy:** Supposing another province was to ask for the loan of your films, would there be any difficulty in giving it the loan?

**A.** Our difficulty at the moment would be that we have only got one copy of each of these films. Our number is very limited and to lend any of them at the present moment for any length of time would interfere with our own demonstration.

**Q.** If they were prepared to pay the cost price for an extra copy would you be prepared?

**A.** That point has to be considered yet. The films we have taken so far have been taken by a private firm and I don't know whose the negative is.

**Mr. Coatsman:** That Rs. 10,000 grant, have you got to pay the wages of your camera man out of that?

**A.** We have not got a camera man at present.

**Q.** But you will have?

**A.** No, that will be sanctioned separately.

**Chairman:** Did the Agricultural Commission make any enquiries about this film demonstration?

**A.** Yes, they did.

**\*Oral Evidence of Mr. H. W. HOGG, Secretary, Boy Scouts Association, Punjab, on Friday, the 25th November 1927.**

*Chairman:* You are the president or secretary of the Y. M. C. A.?

A. I am secretary of the Boy Scouts Association. I am provincial secretary and also adviser in physical training to the Punjab Government.

Q. You have seen our questionnaire?

A. I got the questionnaire last night for the first time and I have had no time really to go through it.

Q. On what part of the questionnaire would you like to give us the benefit of your views?

A. I would like to give my views on the general question, that is page 1 of your questionnaire.

Q. As regards the industry?

A. No; with regard to the number of Indians who attend the cinema.

Q. Do you go frequently yourself?

A. I go as often as I can get time to do so. I make it a point of going to see what the young students in Lahore are going in for.

Q. And the students in Lahore I suppose are college students?

A. Mostly college students.

Q. And where do they go generally?

A. They frequent, I should say, all the cinemas in Lahore, both in the city and in the Civil Lines but mostly the Excelsior and the Empire Cinema, now known as the Elphinstone Theatre, and also what they call the old Slade cinema. Those three cinemas in the Civil Lines are mostly frequented by college students in Lahore.

Q. And I suppose there they show mostly Western films?

A. Yes, almost entirely.

Q. Have you seen any Indian film at all?

A. I have seen "The Light of Asia".

Q. Shown here?

A. It was shown in Lahore but I did not see it here. I saw it in Kashmir when it was shown in Srinagar. There were two other Indian films—"Damayanti" and "Krishna Janma". I have not seen either of them but some of my men have gone to them.

Q. You think the cinema is becoming very popular with the student?

A. Not only becoming, it has become.

Q. With both boys and girls?

A. I should say entirely with young men, unless a very special picture comes along and then you get a number of lady students going, but their number is very small.

Q. Girls do not go so often as boys?

A. There are so many restrictions as regards girls, they do not go out so much.

Q. Now, what is the highest rate the students pay?

A. It varies. I should say the popular seat with the student is the rupee seat. You get a considerable number in the 2-rupee seats, but the popular seat is the rupee seat. A great number also frequent the 8-anna seats.

Q. And there are still lower classes?

A. Four annas, yes. They are generally occupied by the *mistris* in Lahore. Here we have a large railway working population, and most of the men who frequent the cheaper seats come from the *mistri* people.

Mr. Green: Is 4 annas the lowest?

A. Yes. In the city it may be a lower figure still. I am not at all sure on that point.

**Chairman :** What class of films appeal to the students most?

**A.** I should say the most popular film we get in Lahore is the comic film in which Harold Lloyd appears. He has a very great following here. The next in order of popularity will be films like "Robin Hood", (Douglas Fairbanks). Both these actors can always command a full house and are very popular with the students.

**Q.** And social dramas, where passionate love scenes are shown, are they very popular with the students?

**A.** I don't think so. They appeal to a certain type of mentality and the man goes in the course of the week because the film is there; but I would not say these films have a marked appeal to that type of young man. You won't get a full house unless it is a really first class love drama—a film like "Beau Geste" will pack the house at any time. But I would not say that the students have a marked attraction for the love stuff that you sometimes get on the films.

**Q.** And these people in the 4 anna seats, what appeals to them most?

**A.** I should say, judging from the rapturous way in which they applaud the films, comic films and adventure films.

**Q.** I think it is the same in England.

**A.** I think so.

**Q.** The same human temperament which you find in England?

**A.** I think the Punjab is peculiar. You get the Punjabi Aryan laughing heartily at things which are obvious to everybody in the room, both the high class and the cheaper class man enjoys it.

**Q.** He is full of vigour and he enjoys vigour?

**A.** Yes, I have not seen it in any other part of India. It is peculiar to the Punjab.

**Q.** That is what I thought. He is not so easily excited? He is a strong man physically and he generally loves strong scenes?

**A.** Quite.

**Q.** Do you think the cinema has any pernicious influence on the youth of the province?

**A.** I certainly do.

**Q.** In what respect?

**A.** I should say the sort of films we were speaking about just now, love films and a certain type of film which has been shown in Lahore, have a decidedly evil influence on the mind of the student, of the boy, of the young man. You take, for instance, a film which appeared last week called "The Ring"—a highly emotional love drama with the everlasting triangle of two men after one woman. You see a man and a woman for fully 30 seconds in a close-up, kissing and hugging for all they are worth. My opinion is that it is an influence for evil on the minds of young men who are very highly susceptible at their age to this kind of film. Although films of that type do not appeal to the general class of young man who frequents the cinema, still those who go there are bound to be influenced by them. You have such a lot of young men going there and you should hear the remarks they pass while these things are going on. That is where the cinema has a pernicious influence among the young men, specially of the student class.

**Q.** And what do you suggest should be done?

**A.** It is very difficult to legislate with regard to these things but I should say that a tighter hold could be made over the films coming into the country at the port of entry, if you cannot censor them here in your province. It is difficult to censor a film that has already been passed in Calcutta and Bombay and has been shown in different parts of India.

**Q.** You would exclude all such films?

**A.** I would go the length of saying that I would exclude all films of the baser type. There are certain scenes which one does not mind but in this

particular film I was speaking about you get a woman being tempted by a man. She goes off with this man and there is nothing to condemn her for doing it. All through the film she is applauded for what she has done. At the end of 10 or 15 years she comes back still living with this man, and she is received back into the home of her husband, still with this man and the two men sit together and laugh their sides out at their having been so badly bitten. The son and the daughter-in-law try to do the same thing. There is not a single thing until the end of the film where the wronged young husband hammers the other man.

*Q.* Where virtue triumphs over vice?

*A.* Yes. There is nothing at all through the body of the film to give anyone in that audience the idea that this thing was wrong.

*Q.* You think it would be wrong also in England?

*A.* Absolutely. It is wrong in any country. Only, I will say, as far as India is concerned, the dragging in the mire of the home life of the Western races cannot have a good effect.

*Q.* Why do they produce such films?

*A.* You get an audience for it. You get a white woman being easily led astray say by an Arab, say in the shape of a Sheikh, or you get a white woman leading a loose idle life and going about with different men, that is bound to lower the respect of Eastern races for white women of the Western races. It is different in the case of a Western audience. They know that these things are done in a studio. There may be a certain type of white woman that does it but the whole race of white women do not do these things.

*Q.* Do you think that your college students think that the whole race of Western women do these sort of things?

*A.* I should say it has a tendency to lower the respect of the man who frequents the cinema towards womenfolk generally. I would say that this applies both to Indian ladies and to white women; but it does lower the white woman's standard in this country; it is bound to affect that. All you have to do is to sit in the cinema and listen to the remarks made by some of these young men, just to realise how this thing is getting really under the skin.

*Q.* Do you think the college students understand the western life that is led here by the western people? Don't they misunderstand, for instance, the mixed bathing?

*A.* There is no sea shore here.

*Q.* Supposing they see the bathing at Juhu?

*A.* I daresay it would help them to misunderstand western life.

*Q.* Is it not more pernicious?

*A.* I would not say so. But here is an agency which is giving you an intimate study of the white man's life with all the gaudy tawdry stuff which you get in many of your films, where the man or the woman is obviously out to seduce the other.

*Q.* What about the novels?

*A.* They have also an evil influence.

*Q.* Would you censor them?

*A.* I would certainly censor many of them.

*Q.* Have you seen the Beauty Competition pictures in the *Times of India*, the ladies in bathing costumes?

*A.* I don't think that has a bearing on the cinema: we are now dealing with the cinema.

*Q.* Would you also censor them?

*A.* I should say those things should be censored. I mean, all things which go to lower the dignity of womanhood should be censored.

*Q.* Then what is the peculiarity about India? You want to make a difference between the east and the west?

A. Here you have a small number of English people living in a country where the great majority are illiterate. Many of these English ladies are living in isolated stations where very often law and order is not maintained, and if this kind of thing went on, the dignity and the respect which is due to a woman, whether she is English or Indian, would certainly be lowered, and the cinema is bound to affect the mentality of the illiterate people.

Q. Can you give us any instance where a college student has misbehaved on account of the cinema?

A. I cannot. I could give you an instance which happened about 12 years ago in Colombo. I can't give you any instance in the Punjab.

Q. It is more an apprehension of what may happen rather than anything based upon your experience?

A. It is an apprehension which may be realised any day.

Q. Don't you think education is the proper remedy for this?

A. Yes, but you know how limited education in this country is. Take your average college man going up for the B.A. or M.A. The whole time he is cramming. It is not a general education. He is cramming up certain subjects to pass certain examinations.

Q. I thought there were more people in Punjab who were acquainted with the manners and customs of the west than in any other province?

A. They are proportionately very small.

Q. I see a larger number of Indians dressed in English style here than in my own province?

A. I put that down to the rigours of the climate, they all want warm clothing.

Q. It is more your fear of what may happen in the future than what has happened hitherto?

A. I should say it may happen any time. I have discussed this question with my own men. I have run a number of training classes for graduates for training them as physical advisers, and they all admit that this kind of thing is detrimental to the building up of a physical life amongst the boys. Many of the lads are excited inside the picture house, and there is no telling what might happen. They all agree that such kind of pictures tend to lower the dignity of the women and that such pictures should not be shown to excitable young men at an age when they are easily excitable.

Q. Is it not more a question for the country where these women live rather than for India? Should you not make your appeal to the people who produce these films rather than to India?

A. How can we make an appeal to the producers? After all, why are they producing such pictures? It is all a question of £ s. d., and if a man can make money by means of such pictures no amount of appeal will prove of any avail.

Q. What object has he in lowering his own women in a foreign country?

A. He is not concerned very much with anything else but making money.

Q. Who are we to take notice of them?

A. We as men should tell them that they can't make such films.

Q. Why don't you say the same thing in England?

A. I should say the same thing in England too.

Q. Has any public man tried to stop such kind of thing in England? Does public opinion respond there?

A. After all, what is public opinion?

Q. The difficulty is, you want to have one thing for India which you don't want to have for England?

A. Please don't misunderstand me. We don't want to lay down one law for England and another law for India or for any other country.

**Q.** I may tell you that I received a letter yesterday from a lady friend of mine in Burma in which she says that she is sorry that I am sponsoring this Committee; she seems to think that it is all intended to bolster up British films, and she questions me as to why I have joined this Committee.

**A.** My contention would be just as strong on behalf of the Indian lady if I saw her being subjected to such humiliation as in the case of an English lady.

**Q.** Your people have not taken exception to Miss Mayo's book?

**A.** It is a great pity that many of your own men gave her publicity. She got the publicity from India.

**Q.** I want you to understand how Indians look at this point. But really it appears to me that the real remedy lies in England and not in India?

**A.** May I point out to you, Sir, that the real trouble is in America and not in England.

**Q.** Then why should not England bring her influence to bear upon America? Why should she buy 99 per cent. of the films produced in America?

**A.** It is a very difficult question in dealing with a commercial combine. When it comes to a question of making money, you cannot stop anybody from producing a particular kind of pictures.

**Q.** Is not such filming lowering the Englishman in his own eyes and in his own country?

**A.** Not necessarily. Because the average Englishman in this country has an intimate association with English homes. He knows that the type of film shown here is not a true picture of what is done in an English home. It is done amongst a certain classes of women whose number after all in England is very small. But this continual dragging of this subject before the public gives the young man out here the impression that all women are alike.

**Q.** You say the Englishman does not mind it because he knows it is an exception, but still even as an exception it will apply to all women? It is a human thing, is it not? As a matter of fact, woman is degraded, and should not an Englishman resent it?

**A.** He does so, absolutely.

**Q.** He resents it in India and not in England?

**A.** I may tell you that this think is being fought in England too. The Vigilance Committee which has been formed in Glasgow is doing a great deal to fight this kind of thing.

**Q.** It seems to be a cry in the wilderness. I wish such action were taken in England.

**A.** There are many great societies which are fighting this evil tooth and nail in Great Britain.

**Q.** What is your point of view? Do you want the same standard of censorship here as it is in England, or do you want a different standard?

**A.** I should say the same standard should apply to all.

**Q.** Whatever is passed for exhibition in England, would you say, should be prohibited in India?

**A.** On account of local conditions some of the things should not be shown.

**Q.** Your point is that the Indian should always have a hallowed view of the white woman and therefore he should not be shown such pictures?

**A.** Don't misunderstand me. I would not say that at all. Speaking now as a cinema-goer, it is not a question of asking Indians to have a hallowed view of English women at all. It is asking the men who are in this industry to raise the whole tone of a film so far as womenfolk are concerned, whether she be English or Indian. I say that white women are not confined to England alone.



**Q.** Your point is that no woman should be lowered. That is certainly a sound proposition and there can be no two opinions about it.

**A.** I think I have tried to convey that impression correctly.

**Q.** I mean, if you put it on narrow ground, you are likely to rouse antipathy and our work is not likely to be met with sympathy, because we want to do something which will really be useful. We don't want to admit grounds which would at once rouse racial animosity or racial partiality. I suppose you agree in that?

**A.** Yes, I do agree with you there.

**Q.** Barring this, are you satisfied with the censorship as it goes now?

**A.** No, one cannot be satisfied with it. You get films here which ought not to be shown anywhere. I would strongly advocate stricter censorship.

**Q.** What is your suggestion for it?

**A.** I say the censorship should be of such a nature that the local censors should have the power to stop any film at any time if the local conditions demand such stoppage.

**Q.** One remedy perhaps for creating a new taste in the country would be to produce Indian films which would appeal to Indians?

**A.** Yes, I should say that if Indian films were produced on really sound lines it will distract the taste of the public for the western film, and if the Indian film is well produced in a natural way, it would make a decided appeal to the Indian audience. The two films I mentioned did make a decided appeal.

**Q.** I see that in Lahore you suffer from a lack of supply of Indian films, because in Bombay the Indian films are becoming more and more popular, so much so there are some theatres which show only Indian films. Apparently you have not got such a supply of Indian films in this province?

**A.** We have got a man here called Mr. Puri who occasionally shows Indian films.

**Q.** Is there any other aspect on which you would like to say something?

**A.** I don't think so.

**Mr. Coatsman:** Among the audiences in the cinema theatres, have you ever noticed the really poor classes of people?

**A.** Yes, a great many of them get in, especially in the 4-anna seats in the city, in the cinemas outside Bhati Gate. There you find quite a number of the poorest classes of people who are mainly illiterate.

**Q.** And rustics too?

**A.** Occasionally you find villagers who come to Lahore to have a good time, and you find the menfolk generally spend their evening hours in the cheap cinema theatres. Where you do get the rustics is where the Railway Publicity Cinemas are showing.

**Q.** We find that Indian films are very rarely shown in Lahore. Do you think these very poor illiterate people can understand the western films?

**A.** It is surprising, for instance, you get a comic film being shown. Very few in the audience miss the point. The man sitting in the lowest class is just as keenly keyed up as the man sitting in the 2 Rs. seat.

**Q.** You mean, it is the action there which makes him follow the thing?

**A.** The film conveys to their mind some impression of the picture which, to my mind, is even more dangerous than the mere heading that you have got on the film itself.

**Q.** I suppose these rustics and the illiterate people do not know what the film is going to be when they go in?

**A.** I could not answer that, but I think a good deal of talk in the bazar goes on. We know these things are talked about. There is also a good

deal of advertising in the bazaar about a particular film, and some of these people know what is coming on.

*Q.* I take it you would not object to love scenes on the film provided they were treated with decent restraint?

*A.* It is often difficult to run a love story without showing some love scenes. What I object to is the "close up", where you get a man and woman standing for a considerable time, the slow movement of either the man or the woman putting his or her hands over the shoulders of the other. I mean, the whole thing is deliberately and slowly done, and that, to my mind, is certainly undesirable. You cannot run a love story without a certain amount of this kind of thing, but if such pictures are properly made with due restraint to decency and so on, they should not have a bad effect at all, but it is the exaggeration of it that one is against.

*Q.* You think that Europeans of our own class in the audience also object to that exaggeration?

*A.* Oh, yes.

*Q.* I personally do object most strongly, and I take it that you believe that it is our general experience?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Well now, you have got a general complaint, I take it, against the censorship, and you think that these unduly passionate episodes might be curtailed or cut out, and that the censorship ought to be more strict?

*A.* I should say specially with regard to many films that come to India. If I were on the Board I would not allow such films to be shown at all.

*Q.* Your experience of the boys of this province is, I suppose, more or less unique among Europeans?

*A.* I have given my entire time to the education of boys. I have to tour in the entire province. I should say for the last 25 years I have moved very closely with the student class in India. I have got my own way, I take my students to the cinema shows. I talk to the cinema managers and so on. But as I said, when it comes to a question of money, no amount of appeal would prove of any avail with the managers of the theatres.

*Mr. Neogy:* Supposing a coloured woman were molested by a coloured man, would you consider such a case to be less serious than if a white woman were molested by a coloured man?

*A.* Certainly not. I think I have tried to explain to the Committee that the dignity of womanhood should be maintained everywhere, whether she is white, brown or black. It is not a question of colour at all.

*Q.* Have you not read of cases in which sometimes coloured women have been molested by white men?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Have you ever protested against it?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* In what manner? Has the European opinion in India ever expressed its indignation at any such thing?

*A.* We have complained against such a thing bitterly.

*Colonel Crawford:* I am afraid, Sir, we are travelling somewhat beyond our limits.

*Mr. Neogy:* My intention is to test the *bona fides* of such an attitude.

*Chairman:* I don't think it is right. I would rather avoid that question.

*Mr. Neogy:* It is a very legitimate question.

*Mr. Green:* I don't think that question has any bearing upon the present issue.

*Mr. Neogy:* Miss Mayo's book has nothing to do with the cinema and yet it has been referred to.

A. When it comes to a question of womanhood, it must be protected. We have to be consistent all through.

Mr. Neogy: I wish you to be really consistent.

Colonel Crawford: Your objection is against the lowering of respect for womanhood on the cinema?

A. Yes.

Q. Your next point is that the majority of the films shown here are western at the moment, and that there is therefore a danger of the respect for western women being lowered in this country by means of the cinema, and that it is the duty of the Government to stop such a thing, irrespective of the nationality?

A. Yes.

Q. And you think that as the Indian film industry grows, if the same danger arises in the production of Indian films, Government should similarly stop the production of such films?

A. Yes.

Q. You were unable to give us any instances which have occurred to substantiate your opinion whether there was any definite danger to womanhood from the attitude of the producers towards it, but you did say that you gathered your impression very largely from the remarks of your own men?

A. One can give certain instances where boys have gone wrong.

(Chairman: You mean where boys have gone wrong themselves? That is quite a different matter. If you mean that the films have a demoralising influence on the boys, it is quite a different thing; it does not refer to lowering womanhood.

A. I have consulted my men on this point, and they are definitely of the opinion that there is a danger to womanhood as a whole.

Colonel Crawford: Do you think that the type of film shown is gradually creating a poor taste amongst cinema going audiences?

A. Yes, it is lowering the taste of the cinema audiences. I may say that the really better class of films do not attract people as much as the sensational variety.

Q. What remedy would you suggest to the Committee in this respect?

A. If films of a better class, like "Ben Hur", with first class settings and first class acting behind them were shown, they would help to elevate the taste of the people.

Q. Supposing the Committee were to act upon your recommendation and exclude a very large portion of the pictures shown now as undesirable, do you think the producer will come forward and fill the void with a different type of picture?

A. I think so, because if the film that he produced were refused he would have no other alternative but to produce a different kind of picture.

Chairman: Do you know they hardly make about 5 per cent. of their income from India?

A. Who is making the money?

Q. America. And India contributes very little?

A. That is a point for the producers themselves.

Colonel Crawford: It appears however to be quite possible that the Indian produced film will gradually take the place of the western film, and when this materialises we will possibly have a chance to put our principles into practice?

A. I should say that if properly handled and if Indian life is properly portrayed, it would have a very good effect on the people of the country.

**\*Oral Evidence of Dr. K. B. PATEL, Proprietor, Educational Pictures Corporation, Lahore, on Friday, the 25th November 1927.**

*Chairman:* Have you seen our questionnaire?

A. Only yesterday. I have not been able to study it carefully but I have got some points.

Q. I see you are a partner in the Educational Pictures Corporation?

A. I am the proprietor.

Q. The sole proprietor?

A. Yes.

Q. How long have you been running this Corporation?

A. About 8 years.

Q. Is that your sole business?

A. Since my son has returned from America after studying all these things, I have started this work and it is my sole business.

Q. What work?

A. Educational. I am originally a medical man but this is my hobby and I work for education as far as possible.

Q. Your headquarters is in Karachi?

A. Yes.

Q. We didn't hear of it in Karachi, otherwise we would have gone to your place.

A. It is in Elphinstone Street.

Q. You import these films?

A. I import most of them. I began making one or two films but when I opened a branch in Lahore I thought I would do more scientific work because nowadays completeness is required in this line, so I have sent my son to Europe to prepare these educational films.

Q. Now you are importing these educational films?

A. Yes, I have got them made

Q. Then probably you would book orders? If you book orders, you will send for them?

A. This mail I have written not to send any further until I hear.

Q. I have seen your catalogue. Have you got any of these films?

A. Yes, I have got them. Off and on I am getting sometimes two, sometimes three.

Q. Do you lend them or hire them?

A. Yes. Specially to the Baby Week or health welfare or officers in any regiment or municipalities or such other institutions, when they come across my name—and I do propaganda and go to them, then I hire them. I also show my demonstrations to the schools.

Q. Have you got a projector yourself?

A. I have got a safety projector.

Q. You carry your fittings with you?

A. Yes, to give shows to municipalities on hygiene, sanitation, agriculture, industry, etc.

Q. Are your services being largely availed of?

A. Wherever I go and wherever the institutions require my services.

Q. I mean, do you do good business?

A. Not much. But I think in the near future when the people understand the value of these things, business will improve

Q. But the various departments, the Agriculture and Industries Departments of the Punjab Government, have you shown them?

A. I have got many certificates from them.

Q. Never mind the certificates. Have you hired your pictures to them? Have they used your pictures?

A. They have used them a few times. My tractors and my films on wheat and cotton and such other things I have also hired. I have sold one or two also. I have sold a film on small-pox to the Information Bureau and I have also supplied the North Western Railway with films occasionally.

Q. And at what rate do you buy them?

A. There are various rates. If they are old I buy them at 3 cents or 4 cents a foot. Used films. New films are very dear.

Q. Most of these things are used films or new films?

A. I have got new ones. Others are used ones.

Q. Where do you buy them? In London?

A. Most of these educational films I get from America.

Q. But I mean, direct?

A. Yes.

Q. Have you got a good supply?

A. Latterly I have not been getting any because my old films are going bad since there is no demand and it does not pay me. Unless I find a suitable market I do not want to get more.

Q. So that you have not got a good supply now? It has not been a paying business for you so far?

A. In the long run. I have found on account of special reasons it does not pay. There are some reasons for that.

Q. Do you know Mr. Bulchand?

A. Yes, I know him from Hyderabad.

Q. He was interesting himself in this.

A. He was doing propaganda. He was giving demonstrations, but that was some time back when it was new. He used to go to the States and for Government and schools. I think it was paying him all right.

Q. He made a gift of the films which he had to the Bombay Government and they are lying idle with them.

A. When they are old they are no use—these Gazettes are sold for 4 or 5 rupees when they are of no use.

Q. So you don't make any films in India?

A. I don't, but I am on the way to making scientific agricultural films and others relating to micro-organisms.

Q. You want to specialise only in educational films?

A. Only in that. I believe in that.

Q. We all believe in that, but are you going to believe in that as a paying proposition?

A. If this is well handled and if there is any surrounding for it, with the Government help it will pay, otherwise it won't pay.

Q. Without the Government's help it won't pay you? Because you can't attract an audience merely for education?

A. The public will never agree to see it. Nor will the exhibitor take it.

Q. Have you ever tried giving short reels to the exhibitors?

A. They have never inquired up to now.

Q. You did try?

A. Of course, I sent them these things. But then it does not attract the audience. In the name of the students also, they will keep one of these films and four of these detective dramas and serials, so in the long run it does not pay. These others are more popular though they are detrimental to the interests of the students.

Q. Do you propose to embark upon producing educational films here?

A. I think so. That is my aim.

Q. Have you got the necessary capital?

A. I think I will be able to secure a start with a little influence. My son is on the continent and in a short time he will go to America. He is in Berlin now. In December he will go to Washington to learn the film art, the art of the educational film. That is photography, micrography and book work.

Q. Have you got a catalogue of these German publications—educational publications?

A. I think I have—by Dulin.

Q. And these instructional films of the German catalogue or the American catalogue?

A. I have got the list of the films.

Q. Can you lend them for the use of the committee? Have you any objection?

A. I can lend them as long as the committee is here.

Q. Just to see what sort of stuff they have. We would be obliged to you.

A. Yes.

Q. Now, you have given us no statement—we don't know what you have in mind.

A. I have come to inform you about the commercial point and my experience with educational films—two things.

Q. I think you have told us your experience, it is not much. What is there in your experience?

A. My experience is that there are difficulties in the way of educational films obtaining a market. There are many hedges from the state.

Q. You mean Government does not encourage them?

A. Not only that, but about the customs and the censorship and various things which make it impossible for the thing to pay.

Q. You mean for importing films?

A. First of all, it is educational films, it does not matter once in a way it is shown. Once during the whole month.

Q. What is it you want?

A. In the customs the same rate is charged for these educational films as for serials and dramas.

Q. You want exemption from customs duty?

A. I think educational books and educational films, etc., should be. They count at the rate of 4 annas per foot and then they put a heavy charge, and the thing itself is only worth 50 or 60 rupees and after two years we have to throw them away—and we have to pay Rs. 37 per reel to the customs.

Q. You want that they should be imported customs free?

A. On the educational basis.

Q. And what else?

A. Then about the censor.

Q. What about the censor? Do they censor these things?

A. If it is an educational film and the importing firm is a reliable one they should be given a licence, that such and such a person will keep educational films which are meant only for educational purposes, and the licensee will supply a certificate that the supply is wholly *bonâ fide*.

Q. You don't want them to be censored at all?

Mr. Green: He wants to avoid the fee for censoring,—Rs. 5 a thousand feet, and Rs. 20 or Rs. 30 for the trailer certificate.

A. Up till now I was under the impression that it is not censored and whatever I have shown also to the Government, they have not asked for

any, but now I have heard in the Punjab that it is to be censored. Since then I have thought either to burn it or give it to somebody as a present. Because I will not realise the amount, whatever I give to the customs.

*Chairman:* They have not been censored, what you have?

*A.* They are all educational things.

*Q.* What is the rule about it?

*Mr. Green:* The Local Government can exempt a particular film or class of film from censorship. For instance, the publicity films of the State Railways have been exempted.

*Chairman:* Whether they are imported films or educational films.

*Mr. Green:* I don't know that Government could exempt them for their own schools, but they could not be publicly exhibited without a certificate otherwise.

*A.* I would like to bring to your notice one thing. In the beginning I thought education was very necessary through visualisation. I saw the list and I bought them. Some of them I got they said had the gesture of the American people, or it is not our schools or our area or public health or tractors.

*Chairman:* That is not a ground for censoring?

*A.* Excuse me half a minute. These things are not exhibited at all. And they are lying with me. If occasionally somebody wants to see them, I have to spend the money to have them censored. I take only Rs. 3 per film to exhibit, and some films for which I paid as much as Rs. 150, I have not recovered Rs. 10 on.

*Q.* What is it you suggest then? You want a licence to be issued to persons to import educational films and that they should not be subjected to censorship.

*A.* Even if it is subjected to censorship it should be given a certificate free. There should not be any fee charged other than the actual value of the film we get.

*Q.* You say the fees are prohibitive in the case of educational films. And what else?

*A.* The second thing is that the censorship causes delay. Educational films are not like dramas which take months to produce. To-day I take a film and within a few hours I have to exhibit it before the public. The literate audience won't see it if it is not up-to-date and the illiterate will never come to see it. If I have to send it to the censor he will take days and the people will have gone away from that place.

*Q.* You mean you want to produce?

*A.* As soon as it is taken it should be exhibited, either that evening or the next day. And if it is sent to the censor he takes about 20 days.

*Q.* It is usual for films.

*A.* Not for educational films.

*Q.* What do you mean by educational films?

*A.* I have taken films on agriculture, on boy scout activities, on industry, on art. I went somewhere where there were engineering feats. I took that.

*Q.* Have you tried it at any time?

*A.* I am preparing for that.

*Q.* Not that you have experience in practical difficulties yourself?

*A.* No, but other people have had the experience and therefore I want to safeguard myself beforehand. These are the difficulties for the educationists.

*Q.* That is to say, if you prepare an educational film there should be no censorship?

*A.* Even if there is censorship, the producer should be allowed to exhibit it on his responsibility. And then he can at the same time ask for censorship.

**Q.** Supposing afterwards it is found that it should not have been shown?

**A.** Then it is the work of the authorities to find a way.

**Q.** You say there should be some facilities in the case of educational films. But supposing you took a delivery case, for instance, and showed it to the youths, you may be showing what is not permissible. There must be some censoring.

**A.** Then the licence should be given to persons of responsibility, literate men.

**Q.** You think you must carefully choose the people who deal in educational films and you must trust to their judgment and if they misbehave, their licence should be cancelled?

**A.** At the time of exhibiting he must apply and invite the censor to see it.

**Q.** Not avoid censorship?

**A.** Some facilities should be given.

**Q.** What else?

**A.** And the other thing is about the value of film education.

**Q.** That is obvious, isn't it? I don't think we will trouble you about that.

**A.** I think in order to inform the public, even it will bring peace to the country and loyalty.

**Q.** We quite realise all that.

**A.** And one thing more. I want to put before the Committee that children should never be allowed to see educational films side by side with the serial. Children under 12 or 14 should not be allowed to see sensational films and serials, because they are more imitative, like monkeys, and try to copy what they see. Those films do a lot of harm.

**Q.** You don't want them to see comics?

**A.** Comics are not always innocent. There are some things which come in the way of student life--comics are about girls.

**Q.** So you would take them to the cinema to get education?

**A.** There are some innocent comics--educative comics.

**Q.** So that you advocate special children's days. Is that your point?

**A.** No, if there are innocent comics and educational things, they can be shown to children.

**Q.** What is your suggestion?

**A.** My suggestion is that comics should not be in any way detrimental or harmful to the children. I have seen many comics that are harmful.

**Q.** Do you then advocate that certain films should be classified as for adults only? Is that your point?

**A.** Yes, that is my idea. Where certain films go beyond innocent comics then they should be classified only for adults, not for children. Because children try to imitate.

**Q.** What age limit would you impose for that?

**A.** Fourteen.

**Q.** Children below 14 should not be taken to these performances which are marked for adults.

**A.** I think so.

**Q.** You have not travelled in the west?

**A.** Not beyond the coast of India, though both my sons have. One was in America and on the Continent for years. Another son is learning the film industry and radio work--how to handle radios, because it is a thing of the day and he must understand.

*Colonel Crawford:* I have only one question to ask. Have you any of these educational films at present in Lahore in stock?



A. Yes.

Q. Would it be possible for us to see one?

A. I will demonstrate to-night if you like—one or two. Some two days back Mr. Sanderson was there and Mr. Perkins was there. The Director of Public Health has taken a few.

Q. Your suggestion to the committee I understand is that educational films should be censored either free or at a very much reduced fee or they should be encouraged to import them by some reduction of the tariff on educational films.

A. I do not understand.

Q. You suggest that the importation of the educational films should be encouraged (a) by their being censored, either free or at a very much reduced charge, or (b) by their being allowed to be imported at a very much reduced tariff.

A. My suggestion is that on educational films, as there is ordinary delivery, they should be free entirely. And in order to encourage this line—it is a sort of instructive line,—it should receive help from the State.

Q. Well now, we do not get over the difficulty solely by such methods. Have you any recommendation to make as to how we should get these pictures shown to the public—the exhibition of pictures?

A. Theatrical people will never show educational pictures, because they have spoiled the taste of the public. They want to show only serials, dramas and detective films.

Q. Have your licences for cinema theatres in the Punjab got a clause entitling the Government, if it wants, to compel them to show a percentage of educational films in their programme?

A. I think if it is compulsorily forced to show them, they will show but in that case the children and all seeing one educational film, that will come in the way of the *bona fide* good of the public, because all educational films they will never see.

Q. Are your educational films of entertainment value?

A. There are a few interesting things, like the circus, teaching the animals, or botanical things, such as how flowers grow, or how to nurse a baby—two mothers side by side one breeding the child in sanitary and another in insanitary conditions; both are poor—so the audience can enjoy them and they learn also.

Q. And you think they have a certain amount of entertainment value?

A. I have got a few innocent comics also. So people enjoy these and at the same time they learn something.

Mr. Green: I take it that this educational propaganda is to you really a labour of love?

A. Yes, but I have invested ample money in it and in the long run I want to realise something out of it. I am not a rich man; I am a poor man.

Q. Your suggestion that educational films should be free of customs; will not that involve the customs officers in considerable difficulties to determine whether a film is educational or not?

A. But surely the importer can supply the details beforehand? If he gets a licence or if he can send a certificate with the details.

Q. Unfortunately customs officers have got to be somewhat cynical individuals and are unable to rely on certificates. They might know that Mr. Patel was a very worthy gentleman who would never deceive them for a moment, but Mr. Patel's rival might not be so scrupulous, and might import non-educational films without the duty.

A. Well, if he is found out, that man's licence will be taken away, so that he will be ruined for ever. His films will be of no use to him thereafter.

Q. Do you think it would be possible for all films to be charged duty at the present rates and for the educational films to be certified by some educational officer and rebate given thereafter?

A. But there will be difficulty. First of all, he can certify—how can he say?

Q. That is the difficulty which the customs will have also.

A. After I receive these things I can show it to the educational authority and if they see it is not of educational value but for entertainment and for the purpose of earning money, then the same money might be deposited by the importer with either the Local Government or with the customs officer and if it is found that it is not of educational value it could be forfeited.

Q. That was more or less my suggestion, that the duty should be deposited in the first instance with the possibility of rebate afterwards. The same difficulty will apply to censors. You want to avoid having to pay Rs. 5 a thousand feet for examination and complain of taking a trailer certificate. But the censors boards have to be financed. That is to say, they charge the fee not because they want to raise the cost of films but because their officers have to be paid. Can you suggest any solution?

A. I think for the good of the public Government can afford to pay.

Q. Government should bear that loss? Are you aware of the provisions that are already in the Cinema Act? I will read you the last section of the existing Act. "The Local Government may, by order in writing, exempt, subject to such conditions and restrictions as may be imposed, any cinema exhibition or class of cinema exhibition from any of the provisions of this Act or any rule made thereunder."

A. No, I have not seen it.

Q. You are not aware then that it is open to you to apply to a Local Government to exempt any particular exhibition from censorship? It could be done at present. I am pointing it out as you are not apparently aware of it.

A. I think it is quite clear, as you have read it to me. But it will take ages before the exemption is given!

### **Reply of the Punjab Government to the questionnaire issued by the Indian Cinematograph Committee.**

2. (a) According to a return compiled in the June last, there are 28 cinematograph theatres in the Punjab, of which 9 are at Lahore and 5 at Rawalpindi. All officers who have been consulted report that literate Indians attend these theatres in considerable numbers. There is also a considerable, though a smaller, attendance of illiterate Indians. The attendance of both classes is stated to be on the increase.

(b) In Lahore, except in the cantonment area, an average cinematograph audience is reported to consist roughly of 60 per cent. literate Indians (including sometimes as many as 40 per cent. students), 20 to 25 per cent. illiterate Indians, and the remainder Europeans and Anglo-Indians.

(c) The Deputy Commissioner of Lahore estimates that ordinarily some 4 to 5 per cent. of European and Indian audiences consist of children under 14 years of age; the number is of course greater when comic films are shown. As regards adolescents of impressionable years, the Deputy Commissioner thinks that these comprise some 7 or 8 per cent. in the case of the average European and Anglo-Indian audience. The figures for Indian students, who are mostly adolescents of impressionable years, have already been given.

3. Films containing passionate love scenes are reported to be most popular with Indian audiences. Next in popularity are films of adventure, especially those containing hair-breadth escapes, and comic films.

4. The type of film referred to in the preceding paragraph has been so long exhibited in the Punjab that Indian audiences seem to have developed a taste for it. It cannot be said that this taste is not adequately catered for.

The number of films dealing with Indian life and interests which have been exhibited in the Punjab is negligible.

5. Indian-produced films depicting Indian life are not readily available to exhibitors, and the few which have been shown in the Punjab are reported to have been generally of poor quality and not popular. "Krishna Lila" and "Krishna Sudhama" are reported to have been successful, but the Local Government has no information regarding them. It is ordinarily more profitable to exhibit a western than an Indian film.

6. There is a division of opinion on this question amongst officers who have been consulted. Particular attention is invited to the views of the Director of Information Bureau, and of Mr. Yusuf Ali.

The Local Government inclines to the view that films depicting Indian life and history could supplant the prevalent western film, if they could be as well staged and produced.

7. The Local Government has no information.

8. (a) The film-producing industry is practically non-existent in the Punjab. The Local Government is informed that there are two small companies in existence, but they undertake little or no original production. They are understood to have produced a few simple propaganda films for, and under the supervision of, various Government departments, but for the most part they are stated to photograph incidents such as reviews and public ceremonies. On the subject of distribution regarded as a branch of the film industry the Local Government has no views. It has been stated that there are 28 cinematograph theatres in the Punjab: most of these are understood to be poorly equipped and indifferently managed.

(b) In the Punjab there seems to be very little interest in the film industry, but the industry, such as it is, suffers from lack of capital and the absence of skilled actors and producers. It is not easy to suggest means for assisting the industry. Expenditure from public funds could hardly be justified since there are other industries more important to the province and having a better prospect of success which possess a prior claim. There seems, however, to be a considerable field for official propaganda by means of the cinematograph and as such propaganda is increased it should be possible for Government departments to place larger orders than they do at present with the various film-producing firms.

9. The Local Government have no information as to whether good films are readily available to exhibitors at reasonable prices. One firm is understood to control a considerable number of cinematograph theatres in the Punjab and to this extent there is a monopoly in the exhibition of films.

10-11. The Local Government have no information.

12. Under the Punjab Municipal Act a municipal committee is empowered, with the previous sanction of the Local Government, to impose a tax on amusements. No such tax has, however, been imposed as yet by any municipal committee.

13. (1) The Director of Industries has given his views on this question in paragraph 4 of his note.

(2) The Local Government has no information.

(3) The Local Government has not sufficient information regarding the film industry to make any suggestions.

14. Yes. Certain Government Departments in the Punjab have begun to use the cinematograph for purposes of propaganda, though the system is still in the experimental stage. The experiment is, however, promising well and the system will probably be developed.

15. Paragraph 6 of the note by the Director of Industries should be seen. The Local Government is doubtful whether in the Punjab conditions are favourable for the development of a film-producing industry on a large scale. The winter climate is apparently a favourable factor, though the remoteness

of the Province from the main lines of commercial movement in the Indian Peninsula is a drawback. The hill area, and possibly certain historical buildings with their surroundings, could be exploited to some extent as a setting for films. But the reluctance of capitalists to invest in industry, the absence of skilled actors and producers and the apparent uncertainty as to the demand for Indian films are all factors which militate against the successful establishment of a film-producing industry on a large scale.

16. Not in the Punjab. A firm interested in the production of films could engage experts from abroad to instruct its employees, or send its employees abroad for training. A suggestion has been made that the Local Government should grant scholarships to enable men to study the technique of the cinematograph industry in foreign countries. But this proposal hardly seems practical in the case of the Punjab, since trained actors and producers could not themselves establish a successful industry in the absence of conditions favourable to its development, and in the absence of an industry there would be no demand for their services. Nor is the indigenous material likely to compete with the imported article successfully.

17. Not at present in the Punjab where capitalists are generally reluctant to invest in industries even in those which offer a better prospect of success than the film industry.

18. The Local Government is doubtful. The Committee will be better able than the Local Government to judge the advantages and disadvantages of the tariff as a means for the encouragement of private enterprise; the industry in the absence of conditions favourable to its development is hardly likely to repay subsidisation. A possible course would be to require the exhibition in all cinematograph theatres of a minimum length of Indian-produced films, but this is obviously a matter which would require very careful consideration.

19. The Local Government have no information.

20. The Local Government are disposed to think that, in the case of the Punjab, expenditure from public funds would not be justifiable.

21. The Local Government would deprecate a state monopoly. But the state might with advantage maintain an agency for the distribution of propaganda or Empire films at cost price.

22. The Local Government favours the policy of encouraging British Empire films. Whether reciprocity in these matters would assist the Indian film industry depends upon the standard achieved by local production. But such preference should certainly assist in a better understanding between India and other elements of the British Empire and the Local Government believes it would result in an improvement of the standard of western films now exhibited in India.

23. The Local Government is in favour of this form of propaganda and believes such films would prove popular particularly at educational institutions, and even at ordinary cinemas managed for commercial profit. No particular measure is suggested to secure co-operation of the various Governments concerned, but the Local Government would be prepared to use its powers in reason to assist in the exhibition of suitable films, which these authorities might desire to circulate.

24. (a) Reference is invited to the views of the Director of the Information Bureau and Mr. Yusuf Ali with which the Local Government are in general agreement.

(b) Not in the Punjab.

(c) In considering the question whether any particular "sex" film ought to be declared uncertified within the Punjab, the Local Government have adhered hitherto to the principle that those films only ought to be declared uncertified which constitute a very definite offence to public morals. Judged by this standard, the existing censorship cannot be said to be on the whole inadequate. The following "sex" films have, however, been declared by the

**Local Government to be uncertified within the Punjab during the last few years:—**

White Rose.	Red Lantern.
Red Peacock.	Five Nights.
Bhadra Bhamini.	Beckoning Flame.
Wages of Sin.	Purple Iris.
Broken Blossoms.	Primrose Time.

Enlighten thy Daughters.

(The list is not complete.)

(d) In the case of "crime" films the existing censorship is, in the opinion of the Local Government, generally adequate.

(e) The Inspector-General of Police states that so far as he is aware there has been no increase in crime in the Punjab on account of the cinematograph.

25. Yes.

26. The existing censorship does not on the whole seem to be inadequate in this respect. Religious susceptibilities vary of course in different areas, and it is sometimes difficult to decide whether an objection taken to a film on religious grounds is really reasonable. The following is a list of films which have of late years been declared to be uncertified within the Punjab on the ground that they offended, or had elsewhere offended, or been held to be likely to offend, religious, with which are included communal, susceptibilities.

The Fortieth Door.	Indiscretion.
Shah Jahan.	After Six Days.
Razia Begam.	Life of Lord Buddha.
Vir Durgadas.	Shadow of the Mosque.

(The list is incomplete.)

In addition, exception was taken amongst Muhammadans to a portion of a film entitled "The Ten Commandments" which depicted Moses being chastised. This portion was proscribed when the film began to be exhibited in the Punjab.

27. (a) (1) Yes. (2) The Local Government believe that this is usually the case. (3) It seems undesirable on general grounds that western civilisation should be misunderstood by Indians or presented to them by means of the cinematograph in a distorted form. (4) This is not a difficulty which can be remedied by censorship, for a film can hardly be declared uncertified on the ground merely that it presents a travesty of western civilisation. This difficulty, in the opinion of the Local Government, must continue to be experienced until the type of western film now generally exhibited in India is superseded by a better type.

(b) The Local Government have no information.

28. Yes. "Sex" films and sensational films generally.

29. No. The Local Government had occasion to examine this question recently and came to the conclusion that the proposed certification would only operate to give an advertisement to objectionable films, and that films which are really injurious to children and adolescents might well be proscribed for all classes of the population.

30. This proposal also has recently been examined by the Local Government. The proposal appears a somewhat drastic one and the Local Government are not convinced that it is necessary. They are also informed that special "children's" films are not very numerous in India, though the introduction of the proposed measure might cause them to be forthcoming in greater numbers. The Director of Public Instruction was of opinion that 18 years would be a suitable age for boys and 20 years for girls, but it was

noted that whatever ages were fixed the proposal would be difficult to enforce effectively.

31. In the opinion of the Local Government, it is one effective method.

32. The Punjab Board of Film Censors was only constituted in September, and it was constituted chiefly in order that the two firms mentioned in the answer to question 8 might be enabled to obtain for their films within the province certificates of All-India validity. These firms, as already stated, produce very few films and those which they do produce deal mostly with subjects of topical interest.

33. Not necessarily; but a stricter censorship than that which at present exists would require to be very carefully supervised. A censoring authority should not, in the opinion of the Local Government, be allowed to develop into an arbiter of public taste or to refuse a certificate on what may be described as aesthetic grounds.

34. The Punjab Board of Censors was established primarily in the interests of local production and should not for this reason be replaced by a Central Board. The local trade is certainly in its infancy, but would be inconvenienced if it had to apply for certificates to a central board which would certainly not be located at Lahore. The Local Government has also learnt by experience that films certified by Presidency Boards are not necessarily suitable for the Punjab, and would prefer to retain independent authority to proscribe a particular film within its jurisdiction. In regard to the advantages of a central board for the examination of imported films, as opposed to a number of boards located at ports of entry, the Local Government has no particular opinion to offer. Practically all films exhibited in the Punjab are certified at Bombay or Calcutta and the Local Government has not found this system unsatisfactory. The cost of censorship should, in the opinion of the Local Government, be borne in the trade in the form of fees, and this principle has been adopted in the constitution of the Punjab Board.

35. (a) Yes.

(b) It appears to the Local Government that this system might well be found more satisfactory where, as is understood to be the case in the Presidency towns, a large number of films have to be examined. The views of the Presidency Government on this matter will, however, be of more value to the Committee than those of the Punjab Government. The present system is suitable to the Punjab and no change is proposed.

36. (a) The Local Government has formed the opinion that the inspectors employed by certain censorship authorities in India are not in all cases sufficiently well qualified. An inspector should be a man of good general education and, in the opinion of the Local Government, one conversant with social conditions both in India and Europe.

(b) Given a suitable type of inspector it does not appear that every film need necessarily be examined by a member of the Board, but the Local Government would be prepared to be guided in this matter by the opinions of the Presidency Governments. In the Punjab there are gentlemen of suitable standing who would be prepared to undertake the examination of films in return for a reasonable remuneration.

37. Safeguards (there are none in the Act) are undoubtedly needed. At present, by an administrative arrangement, each Local Government and Administration in India informs all others when it declares a film to be uncertified within its jurisdiction. So far as the Punjab is concerned, this has not entirely met the situation, for a few films still begin to be exhibited in the province which the Local Government later find it necessary to ban; the only alternative is, however, a provincial censorship and to this, for reasons already stated, the Local Government are opposed. On the whole the Local Government are of opinion that the existing system of inter-provincial reports, coupled with timely action under sub-sections (4) and (5) of section 7 of the Act, is sufficient; the position at any rate is not at present so serious as to call for further measures.

38. All the films mentioned in the reply to questions 24 and 26 as having been proscribed in the Punjab held certificates granted by censorship authorities in India.

39. No.

40. In the opinion of the Local Government power should be reserved to proscribe a film poster in the same manner as a film can be proscribed, and the Local Government is also inclined to suggest that posters should be certified by Boards of Censors at the same time as the film to which they relate.

41. No.

42. No; but the Local Government understand that in England the trade is associated with the work of censorship, and if this is correct a study of the English system might suggest means.

43. Stricter control over import does not *prima facie* appear to be necessary so long as every film is required to obtain a certificate from a censorship authority in this country before it is exhibited. The Director of the Information Bureau in his answer to question 27 (b) refers to a film depicting certain undesirable features of Indian life which was exhibited in England. The production of such films might possibly be legitimate for certain forms of social work in India, but if they are produced their export might well be prohibited.

44. Attention is invited to the views of Mr. Yusuf Ali with which the Local Government are in agreement.

45. The Local Government have no very definite views on this question since the film-producing industry is still in its infancy in the Punjab. A film studio, however, presumably contains large quantities of inflammable scenery and much complicated apparatus, and if this is so it is not unlikely that some form of official inspection might be desirable in the interests anyhow of the public safety. The Local Government are not, however, prepared to express an opinion in the matter.

**\*Oral Evidence of Mr. H. M. COWAN, Home Secretary, Government of the Punjab, on Friday, the 25th November 1927.**

*Chairman:* Mr. Cowan, in the first place I am voicing the sentiment of this Committee when I say we are very thankful to the Punjab Government for the very ready help they are rendering to this Committee. We have heard all the Departments and they have placed their opinions very readily at our disposal. You have sent us a memorandum on behalf of the Government. May I know, if there is no objection to giving an answer, whether it is the view formulated after a full meeting of the Members and Ministers, or is it the view.....

A. No. I do not think so.

Q. Probably the Member in charge of the Department?

A. I think so.

Q. I suppose this Department is run in the Home Department?

A. Yes. There are two Members of the Executive Council, one is the Finance Member and the other is the Revenue Member. This subject is dealt with by the Revenue Member.

Q. There is very little of film production in this province from what you say. Indian films, we understand, are getting very popular in Bombay and also in Bengal. Is there any reason why Indian films are not produced here? We understand the natural advantages are very great here. What are the peculiar difficulties of this province?

A. I know of none.

Q. Except shy capital and want of enterprise?

A. Yes. I should say I have practically no experience. I have just taken over my present post a few days ago and I am afraid I really cannot think that my opinions are entitled to any weight.

Q. Was there any attempt at introducing any amusement tax in this province?

A. I do not think so.

Q. Probably you do not need it and your finances are good from what we see. There is one point on which we should like to have your views. As regards the activities of the various departments, I see they recognise in the Punjab that the film will be a very effective means of propaganda work for the use of the public. Your officers who appeared before us yesterday advocated a provincial agency for producing the required films. They prefer that to a central agency. One of the questions we will have to consider will be the question of a central agency. A central agency is inevitable in certain matters, where the provinces could pool their resources together so far as technical assistance is concerned. I want to know whether your province would fall in with such an idea.

A. I do not think it has been considered by the Punjab Government.

Q. That will be a matter that will be considered by them?

A. I should say, speaking personally, that the provincial organisation will be necessary because so many of the films that will be wanted would have reference to provincial matters only.

Q. The idea is to have a well equipped central studio which will produce the necessary films. It will send out experts to each province, and under the guidance of its officers, they will produce films required for each province and they will use the local material. So far as developing, printing and editing is concerned, that will be done in the central studio, and the studio will be a co-ordinating agency for all the various provinces. A central agency does not necessarily mean that provincial considerations will not be taken into account.

A. I quite understand that.

Q. The point is, there will be a great deal of avoidance of reduplication if there is a central agency. At the same time there is a great deal of advantage in a provincial agency because they can reproduce provincial conditions much more effectively than a central agency can.

A. Particularly if you wanted to have a combination of the talking with the cinematograph. I do not know how far it has gone. I saw one at Lahore.

Q. Of course, there will always be the language difficulty.

A. Yes.

Q. I suppose your Government will consider that point and that they will not be averse to it. They have not got a *prima facie* objection to a central organisation?

A. I am speaking personally. I think that a provincial organisation would be more advisable, perhaps with a central co-ordinating agency, but not to supersede the provincial organisation. So many of the films are local. You have seen the Director of Agriculture in the Punjab and the Government are now considering the question of having a film producing staff.

Q. There is another question of principle which your Government may also have to consider, whether in this public utility, propaganda work Government would manage it through its own concern, or entrust the work to a private agency to produce the necessary films.

A. I do not think that point has been considered.

Q. Any way your Government is bent on producing these propaganda films in the education, industries, agriculture and co-operative departments, so far as we are able to gather.

A. Yes.



**Q.** I see your Government approve of the principle of a quota system in order to make Indian films popular or rather marketable. Paragraph 18. That is the course which is adopted in England in order to encourage the growth of the British film industry.

**A.** Personally I should be very much in favour of it.

**Q.** Without a market for Indian films you cannot expect Indian films to be produced?

**A.** No.

**Q.** There is also another aspect of the question. The production of Indian films and making them popular may get rid of some of these objectionable western films for which a taste is being created.

**A.** I feel very strongly about it.

**Q.** You mention in your memorandum that a sort of low taste is being created by the exhibition of these western films. It is very difficult to deal with that point. One way of dealing with it, it is suggested, is the encouragement and growth of production of Indian films.

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Would your Government be prepared to consider aiding the Indian industry?

**A.** Financially?

**Q.** Say in the shape of loans to the industry.

**A.** The industry can get loans under the Act.

**Q.** The terms seem to be rather severe. You require landed security for more than 100 per cent. of the loan granted, and the time given is only six or seven years. These seem to me rather a handicap on persons seeking to embark on this line. Would your Government be prepared to consider more favourable terms?

**A.** I think they were very guarded in their reply in the memorandum.

**Q.** Of course, other facilities may be given by Government, such as access to public places to take photographs, the lending of Government paraphernalia for the purpose of taking views of them, and such like?

**A.** Surely. I would be very strongly, myself, in favour of the Indian produced films.

**Q.** They are very popular in Bombay although they are very crudely produced.

**A.** One feels that there is tremendous scope for the expansion of this industry in villages.

**Q.** At any rate, if it could not go so far, it could go to the headquarters of tahsils at least.

**A.** Yes. The villagers are really very fond of dramas. You have got these dramas of *Ram Chandra ji ki jai* still in the villages and in the North-West they have their own dances and so on. I think if a suitable type of film were developed and you had these travelling cinemas, a great revolution would be made in the life of the average villager, a change which would be very much for the better, because, (I am speaking again personally), a large proportion to my mind of these marauders, dacoits and robbers—the offences they commit are all due to the fact that the villager has not got any suitable means of recreation.

**Q.** Either he goes to the grog shop.....

**A.** There are not very many grog shops in the villages. But they go in for a lot of quarrelling and other things. You may have seen or heard of the propaganda work that is going on in the Gurgaon district, south of Delhi, in which Mr. Brayne, the Deputy Commissioner, is keenly interested.

**Mr. Green:** The film 'Rural Reconstruction' which we saw exhibited by the State Railways was, I think, done in Gurgaon with the assistance of the District Magistrate there.

*Chairman:* We shall try to get at him either here or at Delhi. You consider that money spent on that will be well spent?

*A.* Money spent by Government?

*Q.* Yes.

*A.* I could not go to that length.

*Q.* I mean, judiciously?

*A.* I am not speaking on behalf of Government, but personally. Personally I think that before one were to do that a more definite scheme would need to be worked out. I certainly consider it might possibly be advantageous for Government to help the industry for that particular purpose only, that is, propaganda, and for giving the villagers innocent amusement.

*Q.* The system which is referred to in paragraph 18, is known as the quota system. You personally approve of such a course?

*A.* Yes. I approve of that, I should add, with suitable conditions.

*Q.* They have adopted that in England. As regards the training of actors and actresses and also the training of camera men in connection with the industry, would your Government be prepared to consider the adding of vocational classes for this purpose in the schools?

*A.* I do not think I can give you an answer to that. Personally speaking again, I should very much doubt it. It is rather a question for the Director of Industries.

*Q.* You mention in paragraph 16. (Reads). In order to guide the industry on proper lines some sort of education is needed, and that is why we ask whether Government would be prepared to give scholarships for deserving people who are found eligible for it, to get their training elsewhere, or add vocational classes in one or more of the schools in order to give proper facilities.

*A.* I doubt if Government will do that because Government has so many technical institutes and technical forms of education which it is encouraging that I think it would hesitate a good deal before giving money for vocational training in this industry which largely caters merely for the pleasure of the people.

*Q.* One point of view which presses upon me is that the cinema, at any rate, is, although you may call it a luxury for the richer and the well-to-do classes, for the poorer classes, the villagers, the only amusement they can get and it is a healthy amusement too.

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* And from that point of view don't you think that it would be proper to spend money for creating facilities for such people?

*A.* Not at the present stage, but after some development it might be.

*Q.* If you look at paragraph 22, page 4, your Government favours a policy of encouraging British Empire films. The more important thing would be to encourage Indian films, that will be our primary duty considered from the point of view of India?

*A.* I should think the British Empire films are as important.

*Q.* No doubt they are important, but Indian films are more important for India?

*A.* If you could get them sufficiently interesting.

*Q.* After all each country would like to see things of their own country, of their own surroundings, so that to create an interest in the public and also to create an interest in the industry I dare say your Government will recognise the importance of the encouragement of Indian films first and then of the Empire films?

*A.* I would not be prepared to say that, because I feel it is very interesting indeed to see the films of other countries, and one sees the conditions of one's own country before one's eyes.

**Q.** India is such a big place that very few people, for instance, in Madras, know your progress in the agricultural world and other things. This is such a vast place and there is so much to know.

**A.** I should think the villagers, if you are thinking of them, would probably be more interested in war films and things of that sort concerning countries where so many of their relatives had been than, say, something in Burma or Madras.

**Q.** They might like to see the sceneries in Madras or in Rameswaram. Suppose the temple at Rameswaram were shown they would certainly like to see it?

**A.** Surely, but I would not give preference over the Empire films.

**Q.** Of course such things can be done by mutual arrangement between the various Governments of Dominions?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** You don't want any preference for that; I mean, in order to understand the conditions of other parts of the Empire. It would be more an arrangement for the mutual exchange of films than preference.

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** But I mean, preference implies that you should give preferential treatment to such films, such as, for instance, customs duty, and even if it is more costly make it more accessible and all that. Is your Government prepared to go to that length, making them more accessible, say, by making them free of duty, for instance? Supposing on other films we impose an import duty but not on Empire films, whether they be for education or amusement?

**A.** I think the Punjab Government would have no objection because their revenue would not be affected.

**Q.** Now, the difficulty which you feel in paragraph 27, page 6, or rather which your Government feel is the difficulty of not understanding in their proper perspective the films which are shown. "The Local Government must continue to experience it until the type of Western films now generally exhibited in India is superseded by a better type". Might I also suggest another way, by adding to the number of Indian films shown--that would be a solution also?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** What is your suggestion in order to secure that better type of pictures which you have in view? What is it the Government had in mind? How do they expect it to be done?

**A.** I don't think they have indicated it there; and it is not in the notes either.

**Q.** All right, then I won't ask you.

**A.** I can give you my own views on the subject, and that would be more strict censorship of the bad films.

**Q.** But that won't encourage production. You may be cutting short the supply. As it is perhaps you are aware there are only 350 theatres in the country with a population of 320 millions; and India is not a very paying customer to the producing centres. India is a very insignificant customer for them. So that unless we produce here locally the required quantity or unless we are able to get a better type of pictures at the same cost, India cannot afford to pay much more than she does for foreign films.

**A.** I think, Sir, the better type of Western films would be of very great interest out here, and if the censorship of the bad films were to be more strict it would simply result in the better ones being sent, by which I do not mean moral films or anything like that but innocently amusing ones.

**Q.** You expect that in the natural course of things?

**A.** I should think that naturally these bad American made caricatures of life will in the ordinary course of events grow less. May I read you what the Inspector General of Police, Mr. Cocks, wrote on that subject. It is to a certain extent relevant to the point. He says: "I have no reason for

believing there has been an increase of crime in the province due to the cinema. I regard the majority of the American made caricatures of life in the West, with their emphasis on the incredible antics of the alleged pleasure loving, wealthy classes, on sexual irregularities and on the life of the criminal in the underworld of New York, etc., as gravely demoralising in this country and a misrepresentation of life in the West. It tends to give the Indian an entirely erroneous conception of Western civilisation and morality. I have seen some excellent films in India but the bulk of the stuff shown is rubbish and pernicious, dangerous rubbish. In England the smaller provincial cinemas exhibit films that would put the best cinemas in India to shame, being both works of art and of absorbing interest." (That where the relevancy of what I said about bad films apparently going out comes in.) "I have attended cinemas in India a good deal. I regard the present censorship as merely farcical, another obvious attempt to deal with an evil which is as dangerous as the traffic in drugs."

*Q.* He has put it rather strongly.

*Mr. Green:* That denunciation is not entirely shared by the Punjab Government. You have got the Punjab Government's reply there.

*Chairman:* There is a danger, as your Government point out; the censoring authority should not, in the opinion of the Local Government, be allowed to develop into an arbiter of public taste or refuse a certificate on what may be described as aesthetic grounds. You recognise that principle?

*A.* I quite recognise that and in that connection it occurred to me it might be perhaps a good idea for the censors to take a much more liberal view and give a license for films in the large towns. The more advanced film is strong meat which might be quite suitable for consumption in Calcutta or Bombay where one does not want Government to act as an arbiter of social taste any more than in London. Films might be very well passed for those large towns but not for the interior where they would be liable to create grave misrepresentation. I do not know if there is any system of that kind in existence anywhere at present.

*Q.* It would be very difficult. There are, as you know, different grades of town ranging from a presidency town to a district capital and from a district capital to a tahsil. Then if you come to the villager, it is so difficult to have a censorship of that sort. I mean, practically speaking it means great hindrance to the trade. You will kill the trade in that way.

*A.* With due deference, I think there will be no difficulty, because the large cinema theatres are only to be found in the headquarters, in the large cities. You say there are only 350 theatres in the whole of India. So your more advanced films might be sanctioned for these places and for these places only. That is my personal suggestion, because one feels you are not entitled to interfere with the taste of Calcutta, but that it is the duty of Government in a country like this to see that Western civilisation is not grossly misrepresented to people who are not fit to understand it.

*Q.* Would you apply that to places where there is a population of 50,000 and upwards?

*A.* I would not like to fix a definite standard without consideration. I am only making a suggestion.

*Q.* Now it strikes me as regards Question No. 26, page 5, from an instance given to us yesterday, a sort of objection is taken on what is called religious grounds. Simply because a film depicted in telling a story that a Rajput girl was taken off by a Muhammadan and then eventually rescued by the Rajputs, it seems some people, some Muhammadans, made objection to that scene. Do you think it would be right to recognise such objections? It seems rather to be a handicap on the production of films in this country.

*A.* I agree that in normal times it should not, and I think the Act provides authority for suspending such a film in times of communal excitement.

*Q.* But ordinarily such sort of objection should not be given weight to?

*A.* In that particular illustration, no, Sir.

*Colonel Crawford:* Can you give us any idea as to whether the Local Government places great importance on visual instruction?

A. The Director of Public Instruction would be better able to answer that than I.

Q. I was just wondering whether with the limited amount of finances available the Local Government would say "No, we will stick to primary education and let visual instruction go" or whether they would give visual instruction a certain amount of precedence or a proportionate share.

With regard to the quota system do you think that we should pay a certain amount of attention to the particular needs of various classes. We will take it that there are certain theatres catering for the entertainment of European audiences and audiences including what I might call Westernised Indians. Would you impose on such theatres a quota of Indian films?

A. Well that seems rather hard.

Q. In considering that particular point must we take into consideration the necessities of the various classes of persons resident in this country?

A. I don't think I could give you an opinion that would be worthwhile. I am simply saying, if I give an answer, what occurs to me at the moment. I have not considered it.

Q. Then I come to the question of the standard of censorship. The Local Government have said that they have adhered hitherto to the principle that those films only should be declared uncertified which constitute a very definite offence to public morals. And yet I rather gathered from the evidence you have given that it is possible that the Local Government might consider even something more strict necessary.

A. Not from the evidence I have given, because I am only giving you my personal opinion.

Q. That led me to believe their opinion on the subject was not yet actually framed.

A. I don't think they have any intention of becoming more strict. They have laid it down in their rules definitely.

Q. One of the difficulties which appear to me to be facing the film industry in India is the question of provincial limitations, that is to say, an audience in the Punjab wants his characters dressed in Punjabi clothes. Bengal requires similar treatment for their province. The result is that the market for any particular film is very much limited, in some cases limited to the extent of the theatres existing in one province, which do not make it a paying proposition to produce a film. Are we right in taking that that provincial limitation is a necessity? For instance an audience in the Punjab will see Western films? Are we to understand it is absolutely necessary for them to have their characters dressed in the dress of the province?

A. It is a matter of individual opinion.

Q. Upon which you would not care to give an opinion yourself?

A. I don't think it would be essential.

Q. Mr. Green will deal with the question of the Board of Censors. Whilst it is obvious that you must have a local board for local production are you fairly satisfied with the work of the existing Boards as regards the standard of censorship for Western films?

A. I don't think anything can be said about that because the Board was only constituted last September.

Q. I was not thinking of your existing Board. I mean the Boards that do most of the censoring of Western films, the Bengal Board and the Bombay Board. The number of your films that have been banned is a very small percentage; therefore generally they seem to satisfy the requirements of the Punjab.

A. I doubt if you could draw that conclusion. It is a very different thing to feel dissatisfied with a thing and to feel so dissatisfied that you are going to stop it.

**Q.** I was just wanting to lead up to the question whether a central board for censoring Western films would be a good thing?

**A.** Personally I think it would, coupled with the suggestion I made that the licenses given for the production of these films should be restricted to large cities in certain cases.

**Mr. Green:** I just want to take you up on that point. First of all, won't you have to decide which are the large cities? You think there will be no difficulty?

**A.** I don't think so.

**Q.** May we say offhand that Bombay and Calcutta are the most advanced cities which should have a specially liberal censorship?

**A.** Each province could have its own opinion.

**Q.** But would, for example, Lahore, as the head of the Provincial Government, consider itself entitled to the same films as Bombay and Calcutta?

**A.** I think so.

**Q.** Then that seems to bear out that at any rate the Local Government is not dissatisfied with the present standard of censorship so far as Lahore City is concerned.

**A.** But the opinion I have been expressing has been my own opinion.

**Q.** That I do find a difficulty, because, if I may say so, your views are not absolutely in every way consistent with the more guarded statement of the Local Government.

**A.** Yes, that is what I mean. I said at the beginning "You have got the written opinion of the Local Government here and anything you want to ask me I am only giving my individual opinion on".

**Q.** I will only ask about your own opinion then. To go back to the point of large towns, would the difficulty be solved by your suggestion? Are you not considering more the effect of particular films on particular types of audiences, and are not those different types found in all cities?

**A.** Yes. But it will be difficult to apply restrictions in large cities which you could conveniently apply to travelling cinemas in smaller places.

**Q.** You are aware of the existing check on the exhibition of films unsuitable for a particular locality; the District Magistrate in any locality can suspend the film pending the orders of the Local Government. Don't you consider that is a more suitable check than the difficult one of saying such and such films shall be exhibited only in such and such cities?

**A.** No, I don't, for the same reason as I gave in discussing the previous point, that it is a very different thing to refuse a licence for a certain thing in a certain place. On the other hand for the District Magistrate to interfere with a thing that has been licensed and say "No, you are not to show that" would naturally cause more dissatisfaction.

**Q.** I see your difficulty. Is it not conceivable that in many of the smaller cities there will be a certain section of the population with such education and advancement that they will be deprived of a legitimate pleasure if this is strictly enforced?

**A.** I think that the pleasure of which they would be deprived would be very small as compared with the harm that might be done by the exhibition of these films in such small places.

**Mr. Neogy:** Have you any concern with the transferred departments?

**A.** Are the cinemas a transferred subject?

**Q.** I was thinking more of the Industries department.

**A.** No, I have nothing to do with it at present but I have had something to do with it in the past.

**Q.** Now in reply to Question No. 8 (b) the Government state that expenditure from public funds would hardly be justified since there are other industries more important to the province and having a better prospect of success which possess a prior claim. That is the view of the Government in

the Revenue Department, may I take it? The Department which deals with the subject? And that the Minister of Industries who should primarily be concerned in a question like this has not committed himself to this opinion, I suppose?

A. No, Sir. I can give you a list of such industries if you like. I have just been in a post where I had to deal with them to a large extent,—hosiery; weaving, tanning, etc.

Q. One can easily imagine the other claims on Government funds.

A. Yes, on industries which are going to be useful throughout the province and which are conducted in an inefficient manner in the province at present, also village industries.

Q. So I take it this particular question has not come up yet for formal consideration by the Minister for Industries?

A. Not so far as these papers go.

Q. It is a general expression of opinion on behalf of the Governor in Council on a matter concerning the Minister?

A. Yes.

Q. Now, in reply to Question No. 22 on the subject of Imperial preference you say that the Local Government favours the policy of encouraging British Empire films. To that also, I take it, the Ministers have not committed themselves?

A. I don't think so.

Q. You stated in reply to a question to-day that the Punjab Government would perhaps not object to Imperial Preference. Now, do you think that we should consider the question of the British Empire films before deciding the general question of policy underlying Imperial Preference? There are so many other things that might come in under that scheme.

A. I think the two questions should be treated apart.

Q. You think that even before you decide anything on the general question of Imperial Preference, the question of the film industry should be taken up for separate consideration?

A. I think it might well be taken up for separate consideration.

Q. Now, in regard to reciprocity you say that whether reciprocity in these matters would assist the Indian film industry would depend upon the standard achieved by local production. Now, the present quality of the films, as far as you are aware, is not such, I take it, as to commend them to any foreign market?

A. Not the production of the Punjab so far.

Q. In reply to Question 16, in the very last sentence you say "Nor is the indigenous material likely to compete with the imported article successfully." You don't think there is any chance of any successful competition against foreign films in India itself? Now, similarly there will be no chance of successful competition between Indian films and foreign films in other parts of the Empire too.

A. Commercially there won't.

Q. That being the case how would India benefit at all by such a scheme? A scheme of Imperial preference might be beneficial to other parts of the Empire who are producing films of a better quality because that scheme would enable them to import their films into India and secure an assured market here; but Indian films would have no chance of success in foreign countries or in other parts of the Empire?

A. Not until they improve.

Q. Exactly. Now you say again in answer to Question No. 22, "such preference would certainly assist in a better understanding between India and the other elements of the British Empire." If there is no chance of Indian films securing a market in other parts of the British Empire, how is such a policy going to assist India in getting better known to those parts?

A. When the films got better they would have a market in those parts.

Q. Then India would have to wait till the quality of her films has improved sufficiently so as to secure for the films what is called an international exhibition value--that is the expression used in some of these technical papers?

A. Yes.

Q. Therefore India does not benefit in the least under such a scheme; her films will not find a market abroad till their quality improves, and when their quality has improved, I take it, they will be able to stand on their own merits anywhere?

A. Yes, but I thought the idea of all this business of British Empire films was that a certain part of the performance would be devoted to the exhibition of such films and that you would have a mutual arrangement throughout the Empire for the exhibition of films. You are thinking of some sort of compulsion to be exercised on other parts of the Empire for the benefit of the Indian film?

Q. I understood there was to be an arrangement, not necessarily compulsion.

A. More or less, because if you are to depend on the merits of the pictures then certainly the quality of Indian pictures is very low.

Q. Would it not then need compulsion?

A. You mean mutual arrangement, say the Australian people might care to exhibit some Indian films.

Q. What you are anxious about is to bring about a better understanding between the different parts of the Empire and for that purpose, I take it, you think that the different Governments should arrange a sort of exchange of films?

A. I thought that was the idea.

Q. That is the idea in 23, and not in 22. Question No. 22 deals with the business aspect, customs duties and things of that kind. What you are anxious about is that the Governments of the different parts of the Empire should lend a hand in this matter and arrange for the exchange of instructional films which would enable the different people of the different parts of the Empire to know each other better. That I take to be the opinion of your Government.

A. I cannot speak on behalf of Government.

Q. But personally you would be prepared to approve of such an arrangement, and not have any arrangement under which any sort of compulsion might be exercised in any part of the empire for showing any particular films irrespective of their quality.

A. Arrangement is certainly better than compulsion, and compulsion will be resented very strongly in a matter of that kind. I am giving my personal opinion.

Q. You state that in the Punjab the people would naturally like to see pictures of those countries where so many of their relatives had gone. I believe you had the war in mind?

A. Yes.

Q. A very large proportion of the Indian regiments that went to the war, went to the continent, and not to any part of the Empire. So from your point of view, you think that continental films also should have an attraction for the Indian audience?

A. Yes. I think the British Empire films would include war films, and they would certainly depict scenes from the continent.

Q. They may not necessarily be British Empire films, there may be continental films, German, French or even American, depicting scenes of the war. So you won't treat these pictures on a different footing simply because they are not produced within the British Empire?



A. I was thinking of the Zeebrugge film, that is a British Empire film, that is made in Belgium.

Q. Very good films have been produced by the other countries about the war, and you won't exclude them or place them under any disability in so far as they might be attractive to the Punjab audience for the particular reason that so many of their relatives have fought and died there?

A. Why should we exclude them? Again I say I am giving my own opinion, and not on behalf of the Government.

**Written Statement of Mr. R. L. SHOREY, Technical Director,  
Punjab Film Co., dated the 20th November 1927.**

1. After having had eight years experience in Photography I went to America and England where I specialised myself in the film industry and the allied trades of Photography in about three years. Since my return to India in 1922 I have been running this firm as Cinematographers, being the Pioneer to introduce this industry in the Punjab. During this period quite a good number of Topical and Educational films for the Government, Indian States and the Public have been prepared.

2. Both the educated and illiterate classes are almost equally interested in frequenting Cinemas. There are, however, a certain class of people at every place having the advantage of Cinema shows (not exceeding 10 per cent.) who regularly attend the show. (My answers refer to Punjab only.)

(b) Both classes may be taken as half and half in Cinema houses.

(c) The audience consisting of children under 14 years or adolescents of impressionable age may roughly be estimated at 10 per cent. of the total number.

3. Punjab people are specially interested in dramas depicting romance and chivalry. Religious films also will interest them.

4. As Indian films are not adequately available which Indian audience highly likes, the Exhibitors have to content themselves with whatever they can get.

5. Indian produced films are very few and hence rarely available.

(a) Few of the films so far produced are of the standard quality.

(b) Some of them are, however, good and are sufficiently popular.

(c) Even in spite of any inferiority in quality the exhibition of Indian films is generally more paying than the foreign ones.

6. (a) Yes, I think so.

(b) Historical and religious films will appeal more than the Topical films to both the educated and the illiterate classes.

7. I do not think that the troops require at all any particular sort of films.

8. This industry is quite in its infancy in this country in every branch which naturally cannot satisfy any body.

Being entirely a new industry people are not generally familiar with it and consequently it has not attracted the attention of the public at large. Of late no doubt certain enterprising young men have acquired technical skill in foreign countries but they have not yet succeeded in developing this industry owing to apathetic attitude of Capitalists.

The difficulties of distribution and exhibition of Indian produced films are experienced in no small degree. At present there are practically only two agencies, viz., (1) The Universal Co. and (2) the Madan Theatres Ltd., both interested in the exhibition of foreign films. The latter in addition enjoys the monopoly of more than half the Cinemas in India, and, unfortunately, have never offered any encouragement to Indian productions.

The Government may adopt the following means for the development of this industry:—

- (1) State aid may be given to really deserving enterprises by way of adequate loans and also subsidy.
- (2) By sending out really an appreciable number of graduates to qualify themselves in foreign countries in cinematography.
- (3) By giving every facility to the firms in taking their pictures of important functions and events.
- (4) By allowing the use of Forts and Government buildings for the taking of the pictures, provided it may not cause undue inconvenience to the officials, as well as giving them the facility of filming any military parade display, etc., if they require the same for use in their productions.
- (5) By issuing circulars to the Governments Departments to do all propaganda work through the medium of film to educate the masses in improved methods of agriculture, sanitation, education, etc., and placing funds at their disposal for the purpose, and that such films may be prepared in India.
- (6) Some departments of the Government such as the Railway and Agriculture have started their own productions of Educational films which, to my mind, has not attained any success as yet. Even a portion of this investment, if given to any reliable and genuine firm as an aid, would have materially helped the development of this Industry.

For the purpose of affording facilities and full opportunity to the film producers I shall make suggestions in connection with some other questions that follow.

9. Really good films are not available to all exhibitors on reasonable terms, the reasons for which have already been pointed out in the answer to the Question 8A.

10. Block and blind booking may be the natural result of the monopoly in exhibition and distribution pointed out above but I personally am not aware of it. First run and key theatres do not appear to have much chance in India.

11. Generally the exhibitors have not got facilities of previewing the films.

12. In my opinion the amusement tax does not much affect the exhibitors.

13. I do not think customs tariff has any appreciable effect upon exhibitors. It is at the same time useful for promoting the film industry in this country. The duty however on raw materials and equipments may for some time be removed to encourage the Indian producers.

14. Please refer to my answer to Question 8.

15. Conditions in India are favourable to film productions on a large scale. India contains all shades of climate, natural scenery, historic mansions and buildings and literatures, etc. People are sufficiently intelligent and can be easily trained for acting and other purposes.

16. Under the present circumstances when this industry is hardly known even in half a dozen cities it can not be expected that a sufficient number of technical experts and actors can be readily available but, as already remarked above, people have got sufficient capacity to quickly pick up the required skill. Therefore if efforts will be made to produce films on any large scale there will not be any dearth of technical skill, etc., and sufficient output can be secured for the exhibitors.

In the beginning it may be necessary at certain places to import experts from foreign countries to impart training.

17. It has already been pointed out that at present the industry lacks the backing of capital. The reason for it is that capitalists are not familiar with it as an important industry. The first step, therefore, would be to sufficiently popularise it and to give State support to convince the people of its great

possibilities and commercial value. By these means I feel sure no difficulty will arise in attracting adequate capital.

18. The lines on which the Government can aid the industry have already been pointed out in the answers to Question No. 9. If the legislature may provide that the Government may supplement any portion of the investment required provided the other portion may be forthcoming from private individuals, I consider the people will have confidence and will readily come forward with the required capital. In such cases a certain amount of Government control would be highly desirable.

19. The cost of production in this country will most likely be much less than that in foreign countries.

20. The proposals already suggested, such as sending the students abroad for training or the starting of training institutions in India and other such proposals do certainly involve State expenditure. In view of films being the best educative medium which can help the development of other industries, sanitary conditions, general education, moral and social uplift, it certainly deserves to be given a certain amount of preference over the other needs of the country.

20. (b) These expenditures will naturally have to be met from the same sources from which grants for the departments of Education, Industries and Agriculture, etc., are allotted.

21. The objects referred to in the proposal for creating a State agency having the monopoly of management of this industry are plausible and certainly require the attention of the Government to be carried out with fairness. But I think that an absolute control of the Government will take away the incentive from the people to take themselves to this industry and to acquire experience of management and organisation. In certain cases as in the answer to Question 18 I have suggested a certain amount of Government control.

22. Though I have not had the occasion to go through the resolution I quite agree with the policy outlined therein that British Empire films should be given some measure of encouragement and India should participate in it.

(a) It will be to the mutual benefit of the different members of the British commonwealth.

(b) Better understanding and relation are also likely to result among them.

(c) It should improve the standard of the Western films.

In order to carry out this policy I would suggest that there should be some Government authority in every country whom the producers of the other countries may approach, either directly or through the same machinery of their own country, for the exhibition of their productions in those countries.

23. (a) Please refer to my answer 22 (b).

(b) Please refer to my suggestion made in 22.

24. (a), (b), (c) In my opinion there has not been any demoralising effect upon any class of people.

(c) and (f) Cinema has not accelerated crimes.

25. I do not think any special consideration is necessary.

26. Films are not to be banned, unless there is any deliberate attempt to offend the religious sentiment of any community.

(b) Not to my knowledge.

27. In my opinion cinemas have helped in rightly understanding the Western social customs, morals, etc. Though in the beginning there may be a slight misunderstanding, the same is dispelled in no time.

(b) I personally do not know of any such film which has misrepresented the Indian character abroad.

28. No.

29. It does not appear to be necessary.

30. No.

31. (a) I think so.

32. Censorship in my province has only lately been introduced, and hence it is too premature to form any opinion, but I consider it is satisfactory.

33. (a), (b), (c) There does not appear to be any reason for strict censorship, and if introduced shall certainly prejudicially affect the industry as a whole.

34. No, except that topical films should either be promptly censored or may be allowed to be shown after filing a declaration by any of the producers that the film does not contain any objectionable scene. For in the cases of these films interest will be lost if any delay should occur. If any central Board is introduced, there delay will be inevitable.

35. (a) Please refer to answer to Question 32.

(b) I cannot say whether the change will be for the better.

36. I have no experience of this system.

37. (a), (b) I do not think that after a film has been passed by the censor board of one province, which should be held sufficient for entire British India, any further safeguard is needed.

38—40. No.

41. I think so.

42. The suggestion has been made in answer to Question 34.

43. No, not at present.

44. The press is competent to comment on any film. After the censorship no public body need have any power of interference.

45. (a), (b) The answer is in the negative. Already suggestions have been made.

### **Written Statement of Mr. M. L. RAWLLEY, Managing Director, Punjab Film Co.**

I am a specialist in the Cinematograph Industry. I spent six years in the U. S. A. where I was a research student in Cinema at the University of Illinois. I am a graduate of Palmer School of Photoplay Writing of California, U. S. A., which is one of the largest private institutions of its kind in the world.

Besides this I am a B.Sc. in commerce from the above university. This training has given me sufficient preparation for organising any kind of business on sound basis.

At present I am Managing Director of the Punjab Film Company, the only reliable concern in Northern India which is patronised by the Punjab Government and many of the ruling chiefs of the Punjab such as Bikaner, Bahawalpur, Mandi, etc. Under my supervision many of the ordinary functions have been converted into educational subjects and have been filmed accordingly.

I am also connected with the well known cinema firms of England and America to whom we supply news material from India.

#### **GENERAL.**

2. (a) In Lahore nearly 1 per cent. of the educated class attend cinema and nearly 2 per cent. of the uneducated go to the cinema shows. The attendance is on the increase day by day. I can say this much, that in 1920 when I left Lahore for America there was only one cinema and now-a-days there three good cinemas in the same city.

(b) The composition of an average cinema audience is the following:—

(a) Poor, illiterate class who pay admission fee of annas four.

(b) Students who pay annas eight and some of them pay Re. 1.

(c) Educated middle class pay Re. 1 and some Rs. 2.

(d) Mostly Europeans and some of the high class Indians pay Rs. 3 for the Reserve Class.

(e) The proportion of children under 14 is not worth counting.

### PART I.

3. Indian dramas are the most popular among the uneducated Indian audience. If the quality of these dramas be improved the educated class will undoubtedly give preference to their home productions. The educated class will always like the Indian love stories while the uneducated will always stick to religious dramas.

Next to Indian dramas will come the fighting and shooting and exciting pictures of foreign make and next to them come the comedies of Harold Lloyd, etc.

Society dramas are only popular with the English people and some of the foreign returned Indians.

4. The theatres are generally situated in the cantonments because the exhibitor is sure to get the English soldiers and, in this hope, he does not care to advertise among the Indians.

5. No, they are not easily available because the films are being produced by persons who have little or no knowledge of distribution.

(a) They are of very poor quality.

(b) They are popular with the illiterate audience alone.

(c) Yes, it is more profitable to show an Indian drama than the Western film because the people want to see a thing of their own surroundings and are willing to pay more. Jaidev, The Birth of Lord Krishna, Savitri, etc.

6. (a) Yes, if they have a good quality.

(b) 1. Love stories like Hir Ranja, etc.

### 2. Religious Dramas.

8. (a) No, not at all in any branch of the industry.

(b) At present the industry is in the hands of those who have not spent any time abroad for specialising in it. I should call them as quacks such as are found in medical and dental lines. These people do not know the art of production, distribution, and exhibition. To remedy this all productions in India should be censored and only those should be allowed for exhibition which have achieved a certain quality.

9. No, the price asked is too much and in most of the cases the exhibitor loses. The reason for high prices is monopoly in the trade.

10. Not exactly. It can only be possible when there is majority of people going to the cinema shows and when there are many more theatres.

11. If you give them the lowest rates they do not care to preview. The exhibitors should be taught to do business on percentage. In that case alone he will think of previewing the pictures.

12. Had there been no amusement tax the exhibitor would have decreased the admission fee and thus he would have given a facility to the poor for enjoying the show.

14. Certainly it would help the growth of the film industry in this country to a great extent. At present the parents have their prejudice against the cinema, saying that it degrades the morality and hence disallow the children to attend it. If the programme is mostly made up of educational subjects the same parents will themselves send their children to the cinema.

Besides this cinema is the mother of industries, agriculture, business, politics, and friendship.

In other words, show such films to the children and let them improve their country. These films are not only useful to the children but they are also useful to the grown up men. The Agriculture Department of the Punjab is teaching the farmers by means of films how to discard the old methods of agriculture in favour of the new ones. We can teach them poultry farming and cattle breeding by this means.

In other words there is demand for such films in the schools, for the farmers and for the general public.

15. Conditions are very favourable to the development of Indian film producing industry on a large scale. India's climate, scenery and resources run parallel to Los Angeles, California, U. S. A., which is the home of film industry and which is practically supplying the whole world with films.

India has rivers, mountains, jungles and above all the Himalayan scenery which cannot be duplicated in the whole world.

India has vast story material which cannot be exhausted for hundreds of years to come. As it had been invaded by nearly all the nations of the world it can provide stories based on any civilisation. This privilege is not enjoyed by any other country and hence it can develop this industry on a large scale.

16. I should say that India alone has not got sufficient producers, directors, actors, actresses, and scenario writers for a substantial output of the films of real competitive exhibition value. This defect can easily be remedied by joining hands with the whole British Empire. A few people imported from outside can teach the new generation to fill up the gap and hence, in my opinion, a limited company with equal capitalisation should be floated. This industry requires an extensive market and hence an Empire-wide company is essential.

17. Yes, if an Empire-wide company is floated there not the least doubt of raising sufficient capital from India.

18. Yes, it is the duty of the Government to find out Indian Companies which really deserve help and only those should be financed. All Government work should be entrusted to them.

At present all the work of the Punjab Government is controlled by the Punjab Film Company and the result is that this Company is considerably improving its standard of production in educational films which can be proved by seeing its old and new films.

19. The cost of film production in this country is considerably lower than other countries. The country is full of natural scenery. For indoor settings we have royal old buildings at our command which other countries have to build for the purpose. The wages are considerably lower than in other countries.

20. The Government should do some propaganda work on public health, industry, Education and Agriculture by means of films. Films on Agriculture must be shown to the farmers. Children must be educated so that they may prepare themselves for industries instead of straight art courses and thus avoid the dangers of unemployment. They must see films on public health so that they may improve the sanitary conditions of their country and thus help to avoid epidemics, like cholera, plague, etc.

22. (a) Yes, it would certainly help the development of her own film industry.

(b) Yes, by all means.

(c) Yes.

23. (a) The cinema is the only means of teaching the various Governments of the British Commonwealth about the conditions, resources and habits of the people of different nationalities.

(b) Various Governments should try to float a joint limited company.

## PART II.

24. (a) There are various classes of films having influence on different stages of life.

(b) No

(c) Certain films are harmful to children, others are to the adults and others are harmful to the old men and women.

(d) The censor is strict enough in cases 1 and 2.

(e) No.

25. No, now the people generally understand the western civilisation.

26. Especially in the case of India care should be taken in censoring religious films.

27. Yes, it is very hard for the uneducated Indians to follow the Western films because the customs and the manners differ immensely.

(b) No.

28. (a) No.

(b) No.

29. Yes.

(c) No.

31. Yes.

32. It is far from satisfactory because no film expert is on the board. The board should have at least a part time paid secretary who understands the film business from the dramatic point of view. While censoring the films he must classify them under different headings, and also give out the reasons for accepting or rejecting the films for public show. Some examining fee should be charged from the distributor to make up the expenses of the board.

33. (a) If preference be given to some films over others it will surely interfere with the recreations of the people.

(b) It will involve a falling off in attendance.

(c) Yes.

34. (a) No, because there are certain films which may be good for one province but the same are bad for the others.

(1) In some provinces the majority of the Hindu population forces us to show nothing against the Hindu civilisation. Where the majority are Muslims we cannot show anything against their civilisation.

(2) Yes.

(3) One full time paid secretary (a film expert) and a few members of the board.

(4) Bombay, because it is the port of entry.

(b) Yes, in addition to the central board.

35. (a) Yes, but the secretary must be a film expert

(b) Yes, but where the work does not justify it we should have a part time man.

36. (a) No, it is not at all satisfactory. There should be a high official at each port who is a film specialist in story writing. He must be able to classify the films under dramatic headings and he should be assisted by these film Inspectors.

(b) No need of inspection by the board.

37. (a) Yes.

(b) Not any more.

38. Yes, Dante's "Inferno".

39. Not so far.

40. Unnecessary botheration. No, I have not.

41. The moral standard can be improved if we care to do so.

43. (a) All the raw films (unexposed) coming to India should be free of duty. Those going out of India are not many, so no stricter control over them is needed.

(b) The cheaper the raw films, the lesser the cost of production of India films. In other words it would be an encouragement to the Home Industry.

44. The press could give in the editorial the outline of the story given in film from which the public could get the desired information.

45. (a) Government should watch that the Indian productions should attain a certain standard. In other words, all the films producing agencies

should be registered and licensed. Only specialists should be allowed the privilege of production. If possible Government should finance them to a certain extent.

**\*Oral Evidence of Messrs. M. L. RAWLLEY, Managing Director, and R. L. SHOREY, Technical Director, of the Punjab Film Co., on Friday, the 25th November 1927.**

*Chairman :* When was the Punjab Film Company started?

*Mr. Rawlley :* It was started last year. Mr. Shorey was doing the work alone for the last four years, and it was known as the Shorey Studios. I came here from America in November 1926 and joined him as his partner.

*Q.* Your object is production?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* And also distribution?

*A.* Yes, but later on. We also want to exhibit pictures later on.

*Q.* You want to do both classes of work?

*A.* Because I have studied all classes of work thoroughly, and I want to start one by one. Production is the first branch, and I have started it. Distribution and exhibition will follow later on.

*Q.* Do you mean distribution of foreign and Indian films both?

*A.* Yes, that is my idea.

*Q.* You were a photographer before, Mr. Shorey, were you not?

*Mr. Shorey :* Yes. I am also a qualified cinematographer. I went to America and England, but before proceeding thither I had acquired a good deal of experience in all round photography including photo mechanical processes. I specialised in America in motion pictures.

*Q.* In what part of the industry, was it as a camera man?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* What about directorship?

*A.* I had some experience as a director before I went abroad, because I was connected with a semi-professional theatrical company which I had started myself at Quetta and spent 12 years in. I had also a lot of experience in acting, and, naturally, when I went abroad, I took a keen interest in direction as well as in acting. That was apart from my main profession as a photographer.

*Q.* You attach greater importance to your position as a camera man. I believe?

*A.* I knew that in India there would not be people to guide me in the structure of studios and also in acting and directing, and so I took some interest in these lines as well.

*Q.* Have you got your own studio now?

*A.* So far we have not got any cinema studio.

*Mr. Rawlley :* We are now producing topical and educational films.

*Q.* I want to know whether you have got a studio?

*Mr. Shorey :* So far we have not got one. Of course we have been assisted to build up a studio of our own.

*Q.* How many films have you produced so far?

*A.* Roughly, we have produced nearly 20 complete topical and educational films. We are also producing now a comic film of Punjabi character half of which is complete already. That is our first attempt outside the range of educational and topical films.

*Q.* I suppose all these topical and educational films were arranged for with some of the Government departments?



A. They were arranged for with Governments departments and Indian States as well as the public.

Q. More or less on a contract basis? That is to say, you first of all entered into a contract with them and then produced the film?

A. I made the films to order. We are also producing a certain number of films of our own, and we anticipate there will be a good market for them, and that copies will be bought by Government for publicity. For instance, we are now preparing a film showing the historic city of Lahore.

Q. So far you have only produced films either for Government or for Indian States?

A. Yes, and also for the general public.

Q. What do you mean by the general public?

A. We have prepared advertising films for the public—all to order.

Q. You have not ventured on any film of your own in order to show it to the public?

A. They are not complete. We are preparing some, one is a comic and the other is the city of Lahore, and a third will be called the Shorey Travelling in India, and we are trying to show historical buildings of interest coupled with the history of India.

Q. What about the plot?

Mr. Shorey : Stories are written by our director.

Q. In what part did you qualify yourself?

Mr. Rawley : I qualified myself in America.

Q. In what part of the industry?

A. In almost all parts of the industry—even from the camera point of view. But my main appointment here is on the managing side because Mr. Shorey is a better camera man. I can see whether he is doing work on the right basis.

Q. Of course, you are the business manager. That is another thing. He is on the technical side of the thing. You have no establishment, actors and actresses?

Mr. Shorey : We have, Sir. From time to time, we do employ people.

Q. As occasion demands? But you have no permanent establishment?

A. We have not so far, except the technical people in the laboratory and so on. We employ actors from time to time.

Q. Are you able to get them?

A. Yes.

Q. Of course you don't want many actors for your topical films—the actors are already there.

A. But we are preparing to produce some dramas.

Q. I know, you are preparing. But I want to know what you have done. In these topical or educational films that you have prepared for the Government or for Indian States, you don't require your own actors and actresses?—they are there already—I mean, part of the function itself is the acting.

A. But on certain occasions we have to take films by professional or trained actors. But not very often.

Q. What is the chance of your getting actors or actresses here? Supposing you establish a studio in Lahore, where you want to produce amusement pictures, not merely educational?

A. That is our ambition.

Q. What is your chance of getting actors and actresses?

A. There is every chance of getting actors and actresses in the Punjab.

Q. You think you will be able to get them?

A. I will.

Q. And story writers?

*Mr. Rawley:* I write stories myself. After the discussion is finished I want to give you some scenarios of mine, educational films, just to prove that we can produce them better here.

*Q.* That is all right. We don't want to be satisfied about it. We want to know if you are providing for all this.

*Mr. Shorey:* People in the Punjab, the educated class mostly, are taking a keen interest in the acting side. We have on our records hundreds of applications from graduates, because they believe we are producing dramas; and we receive applications from students belonging to good families who are anxious to act and at the same time they don't want to appear on the boards. They are very much interested in cinema acting and they offer their services even free.

*Mr. Green:* Do you get applications from both sexes?

*A.* No, mainly from the male sex.

*Chairman:* What do you propose to do for actresses?

*A.* Of course, there are actresses but Indian ladies will take some time to come forward. But my personal experience is that there is no difficulty in employing European and Anglo Indian actresses, apart from other ladies who do not observe purdah.

*Q.* But what prevents you from getting on here? Why are you hesitating? You only do things to order?

*A.* Want of finance. Finance is the main trouble, because these dramatic productions require a lot of money.

*Q.* But you must have been making a lot of money by executing these orders. What did you do with it?

*A.* But it is hardly enough for our educational and topical work.

*Q.* What did you charge for these films?

*A.* Rs. 1/8 a foot for the complete positive.

*Q.* And you retained the negative

*A.* We did.

*Q.* So that if any copies are required you can make them and charge for them?

*A.* Yes, but at reduced rates. Only 12 annas a foot for subsequent work. And this rate was fixed by me at the beginning just to induce the public—I mean, the government departments,—because I was the first man that in fact created the interest in cinema films. Of course, I produced films for various government departments with the result that the demands are increasing now.

*Q.* You have got a good demand from the government departments?

*A.* It is increasing now.

*Q.* What capital have you put into this business, if you don't mind answering?

*A.* My concern is worth about Rs. 20,000 at present.

*Q.* What is your estimate for starting a studio? Have you made any estimate?

*A.* Yes, Sir. I have made estimates.

*Q.* How much do you think a studio will cost.

*A.* I have not got the papers here but I can roughly tell you that about Rs. 40,000 will be required immediately because we don't have to depend on electric light as the Americans do. We need the arc light not for illuminating the whole studio but just for fancy spot lights and for that we do not need a very high current. Because light is in abundance here.

*Q.* You have been at this work about 7 or 8 years.

*A.* I have been about 5 years in the cinema line.

*Q.* Both of you have now joined since November last?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* It was with this ambition that you went abroad and you have now come back with some knowledge. What prevents you from going on with it here?

*A.* We have no capital.

*Q.* How do you expect to raise it? Can you not raise it on your own security? I suppose as people who know the trade you believe in it? You think it will be a paying proposition?

*A.* It is a paying proposition but Indians don't come forward with their capital. If they invest one thousand, they want 12 hundred at once.

*Q.* What is going to be your solution? What do you propose to do?

*A.* Our proposition is that the Government should render some pecuniary help in the beginning and then of course the public will be induced to come forward. At present our Indians have not realised the value of the commercial industry so far. If people are approached, they show some interest, but when the question of the purse comes in, they hesitate, and without capital we cannot enter into big business.

*Q.* But there are so many industries, probably of greater importance than the film industry, which require government aid.

*A.* To me the film industry is the most important for educational purposes. For instance, if you spend one lakh of rupees in the printing of pamphlets and so on, they will not have so adequate an appeal to the public as one film will do.

*Q.* That is all right so far as educational films are concerned.

*A.* And moral and social uplift. I believe people can learn a lot.

*Q.* Now the point is this. You say you want government financial help. What is that— as a loan?

*A.* As a loan. And, of course, a grant of some land.

*Q.* I see this committee seems to have encouraged the belief that Government will come forward with some money.

*A.* Of course, without government help it is impossible for us to get on in this industry. Because the people will follow afterwards.

*Q.* I mean, every industry will say that. I am afraid you are relying on a very slender thread if you think that the Government are going to advance money.

*A.* I say Government ought first to come forward and help the industry and then the public will naturally follow.

*Q.* But here you are, two men who know the business and are interested in the business and who have taken the trouble to go out of the country to learn the art, and how did you except to get on? What was your plan?

*A.* Our plan was to build studios here. Of course, we could not foresee that our people would not be in a position to invest money. And so far we have been quite successful.

*Q.* I find you have been successfully encouraged by the Government by the orders they gave you.

*A.* It is not sufficient because it costs us lots of money to maintain our laboratory and technical workmen.

*Q.* How many thousand feet have you produced of these educational and topical films?

*A.* Roughly about 20,000 feet.

*Q.* That means you have made about Rs. 30,000 out of Government?

*A.* But in how many years?

*Q.* Not even five years. It has only been going on since 1922.

*A.* Yes, but this concern was running before that. Ever since my return from England and America I was conducting this business myself.

*Q.* Since you formed this firm, how many thousand feet have you produced, after you entered into partnership last year?

A. I think about 10,000 feet in all. The orders are in hand but the money is yet to come. And lately we have produced the Viceroy's visit at Mandi, that was the Mandi State's order, and one at Bhawalpur.

Q. I suppose you send them out to America?

A. Sometimes we do send them out and our films are shown in all the theatres of the world.

Q. I suppose you expect a good price?

A. No, they don't pay a good price.

Q. I mean, these topical films?

A. They accept only a few. If we send them 500 feet they select 100, the cream of it, and the rest is returned.

Q. Anyway they buy something from you. Isn't that a good market?

A. It is an additional market. We can't depend on it.

Q. I suppose the state pays you for these.

A. Not for these. Only one film, agricultural development in India, and of course that established a good name for the Indian Government in foreign countries.

Q. Yes, they are satisfied with your work. And yet you have not ventured further?

A. Government's assistance is not adequate to keep up our existence.

Q. You want banking facilities really? Why don't you go to the Indian banks or the Imperial Bank.

A. The Imperial Bank without immoveable property is out of the question. Again our Indian banks don't realise the commercial value of any industry—they want to know what you have got, how much land you have got. We have got skill, not landed property.

Q. You cannot find a financial partner?

Mr. Readley : It is a difficult problem here. In America and England your talent would count for something.

Q. Here you have shown your capacity by producing topical films which apparently are well spoken of by the department and yet you say you are not able to get capital for your own industry. Have you tried Indian capitalists?

Mr. Shorcy : From time to time we have tried. They want a business proposition and a further security. Not only security, they want a guarantee that if they put in Rs. 5,000 they will get Rs. 7,000 on the following day. And since we are not in a position to give the security, it is hopeless. But I have got another proposition with regard to the development of the Indian film industry, that is, that if the Government could see its way to float a joint stock company mutually for England and for India.

Q. I don't understand. What do you mean?

A. I mean for the mutual interests of England and India.

Q. That is, to produce films here?

A. No, the alternative suggestion for the capital is that the capital should come from the English cinema capitalists who would produce for them.

Q. Why don't you approach some Englishman or English partner?

A. We do not think that would carry any weight unless the Government will support us.

Q. What can the Government do? They cannot go fishing for a financier to help your business?

A. I think, Sir, Government should take an interest in the development of the industry.

Q. You think the Government should float a company in which they should take shares themselves?

A. No, but they can organise it in such a way that finance of England and India would be available.

*Q.* It seems to be a very original idea.

*A.* That is an alternative suggestion.

*Q.* You say they are not able to do their own work now?

*A.* Who, Sir?

*Q.* The Government of India.

*A.* It is not the Government's work to run the trade.

*Q.* But to go and embark upon finding you the financial support outside! I can understand their giving you loans on easy terms—that is a legitimate proposal to make to the Government—but you think they should go about England and find a financier too!

*A.* I mean to say, financiers who are already in the business.

*Q.* Then it is your business to approach them. You want to start business.

*A.* That is exactly what we want.

*Q.* You don't know the way.

*A.* I know that, Sir. There are two or three ways—either the Government should help it or if they fail to help, the alternative suggestion is that both the industries of England and India should be joined together and work jointly.

*Q.* I quite believe in a partnership between Englishmen and Indians in order to launch this concern—but what can the Government do in this matter? It is a matter of private arrangement.

*A.* But if the Government will recommend the proposition to the industrial and other departments in England, they can easily find out.

*Q.* You want, more or less, introductions?

*A.* And at the same time substantial help.

*Q.* Then you won't be able to embark upon producing films in this province unless you get financial help?

*A.* Of course we will continue.

*Q.* You are struggling now with orders. Without orders you are not making any effort. And there is no chance of your embarking on production, unless you get money from somebody?

*A.* At the same time we will have to struggle for ourselves. Of course, our concern is improving day by day, year by year, and we have made a marked improvement.

*Q.* Have you put by any of your earnings for developing your trade?

*A.* We are doing that, Sir. Just a portion of it. We have got to increase our apparatus.

*Q.* Here are two educated young men with ambition who have qualified yourselves for this industry—and there you are blinking. That is what it amounts to.

*A.* No, not exactly. We have made a good success. If we had money at our disposal we could have produced more matter suited to the province. Of course our films are already suited to our needs. But we have not produced any dramatic productions for want of money.

*Q.* Now you advocate, I see, Mr. Rawley, in answer to question 8, you seem to suggest that the censorship should embrace the quality of the picture too.

*Mr. Rawley :* Yes.

*Q.* Is it possible?

*A.* Yes. I mean to say I am not satisfied with the present productions of Indian pictures.

*Q.* But would you like your films, if you produced them, censored as regards the quality also?

*A.* Sure. Quacks must go away from the market. That is the rule, for instance, in the medical line and the dental line.

*Q.* There are no quacks in your province?

*A.* There are, and they will come forward when they see that we are successful. Somebody will come forward and begin the work.

*Q.* So you want to have the monopoly?

*A.* No, not monopoly. It is the struggle for existence and the survival of the fittest.

*Mr. Green :* Isn't public opinion and commercial results going to decide between you—in other words, competition?

*Chairman :* What would you think, as a business man, supposing somebody else made a proposal of this kind, that censorship should embrace the quality of the production?

*A.* I would accept it, because I am not afraid of my productions. If my quality is poor, I will go back.

*Q.* So you want that also. Do you know that there are sufficient studios in Bombay?

*A.* Yes, there are.

*Q.* Have you seen them?

*A.* No, I have not seen them, but I have seen their productions.

*Q.* I don't think you would care to criticise their production, you being in the trade.

*A.* I have to criticise because they are not producing good pictures.

*Q.* Yes, but you would be liable to be criticised too. They are doing something to satisfy the public, but you are not doing anything.

*A.* I believe in good quality. I don't want to produce crude pictures. I can produce crude pictures for Rs. 2,000.

*Q.* They spend Rs. 20,000 or Rs. 30,000 some of them. Have you seen "Sacrifice"?

*A.* No.

*Q.* Have you seen "The Light of Asia"?

*A.* I have seen it, but how much money did they spend? And are they making profit or loss?

*Q.* We are told they are making a good profit.

*Mr. Shorrey :* May I answer this question about the production of "The Light of Asia"?

*Q.* No, I don't think we will go into individualities. Question 9—you say the price asked is too much. You mean foreign films or Indian films?

*A.* Foreign films.

*Q.* The price asked is too much?

*A.* Of course, because there is monopoly in this business and they can dictate.

*Q.* You mean you want to buy from the importer?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* But have you ever tried yourself?

*A.* Yes. And I can show evidence from their letters that they want to control the market, they won't give me a chance.

*Q.* Then why don't you go and buy yourself? You have been to America.

*A.* Again it is a question of finance. There is a company in India who have 80 lakhs. There is a limited company in India now—I don't hesitate to name them—Madans—they have 80 lakhs at their disposal and I am without finances. How can I compete with them?

*Q.* Buy from another company. I mean, there are several people in Bombay who buy from outside. Madan Theatres don't buy all the pictures?

*A.* There are two or three. One is Madans, the other is Pathe, and the third is the Universal.

*Q.* But people in Karachi told us that they were able to buy without any difficulty.

*A.* I don't think they can buy good pictures. They can buy cheap pictures—rubbish as you say,—because I have been in the business for six years and I have been struggling hard. And wherever I went they said: Madans have got 80 theatres, have you got one? If I could show them that I had five theatres I could smash Madan Theatres. Because they believe in me since I am a specialist in this line and they think I can bring more money for them. But the question is finance. Not even one theatre up to this time.

*Q.* But why don't you hire theatres here?

*A.* By and by I will.

*Q.* I mean, you seem to overrate your difficulties.

*A.* There is another thing in this question of monopoly—unfair competition.

*Q.* What do you mean by monopoly? How many theatres are there in India?

*A.* 340.

*Q.* And how many do Madans own?

*A.* About 84.

*Q.* And you think that is a monopoly?

*A.* Yes, because they are the sole controller of pictures in this line.

*Q.* That is, they are able to buy them. Then you have good pictures in your possession.

*A.* If I had good pictures in my possession I could compete with them.

*Q.* Why don't you get pictures? There are thousands of pictures produced in America. In fact, we are 18 months behind time, we are told.

*A.* The question is, when Douglas Fairbanks is popular, why shouldn't I be able to buy Douglas Fairbanks?

*Q.* Do they get a monopoly to buy all Douglas Fairbanks pictures? Could one be sold in India to nobody else?

*A.* No, not to anybody else. Mr. Madan went there and said: "I am the only controller of 80 theatres and here are my terms, if you want these terms all right, if you don't all right."

*Q.* You mean to say that Madan Theatres, Ltd., alone can buy pictures in which Douglas Fairbanks stars?

*A.* Yes. I tried my best to buy these pictures for myself.

*Mr. Green:* Supposing you offer twice as much as Mr. Madan? Isn't it a business question pure and simple? Whoever can pay the most gets the pictures.

*A.* Another thing regarding Madan's monopoly is that they never encourage Indian pictures. For instance, I wanted to show His Excellency the Viceroy's visit to Lahore—I wired to Madan. He said, "No, we regret we cannot show any other film except Madans productions." Now the Viceroy's visit to Lahore was very successful and I have a testimonial for it still in my pocket. I sent it to Germany and it was highly appreciated and they made a story out of it. So far as the quality of the picture is concerned and the subjects are concerned, they are excellent.

*Chairman:* May I take it that these 60 or 70 odd theatres which are controlled by Madans are in localities which are most popular?

*Mr. Shorey:* Yes.

*Q.* They are mostly in good localities?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Although there are 340 odd theatres, these 60 or 70 odds which are controlled by Madans,—I forget the exact number,—are perhaps the most important of the theatres?

A. Yes.

Q. Where box office receipts are greater than in other theatres? They would not take any Indian films except those produced by themselves?

A. Yes.

Mr. Rowley : I may tell you what I have heard.

Chairman : If you do not know anything yourself there is no use of repeating what you have heard.

Mr. Neogy : That film of His Excellency the Viceroy's visit to Lahore—was it exhibited in any other theatres of Lahore not owned by Madans?

Mr. Shorey : It was exhibited in the Universal Theatre twice.

Q. Only one theatre?

A. Yes. It was also shown in Multan, Ferozpur, Rawalpindi, and, if I am not mistaken, in Dehra Dun also.

Chairman : All the fashionable theatres are in their hands?

A. Yes.

Q. You are for a quota system under which every theatre should exhibit a proportion of Indian films in each show?

A. Yes.

Q. So that Indian films may be encouraged?

A. Yes.

Q. You think it will be a good thing to adopt the quota system?

A. Yes.

Q. In answer to question No. 32 you say "it is far from satisfactory because no film expert is on the Board". Do you want him to be a camera man, or an actor or actress, or what do you mean by a film expert being on the Board?

Mr. Rowley : You have heard some evidence and there were some ladies in Bombay who told you that the pictures were demoralising and that the censorship should be stricter. I want to tell you that however strict the censorship may be you cannot be satisfied with it. They will still go on telling you it is demoralising, it is demoralising, it is demoralising. One picture cannot satisfy every class of people. There are pictures which have psychological effects on children, on adults, unmarried girls, on married women and old men. They are all different. In censorship there should be a man who can classify the drama. In America they have a National Board of Review whose work it is to classify the drama and the list is published in the papers that such and such pictures are fit for boys, such and such for married women, such and such for unmarried women and so on. That Board is doing good work. Supposing some picture is good for boys and if the adults go there, they cannot complain about it because the advice has already been given "it is for boys only."

Q. Even they go with their eyes wide open. However that seems to be a good suggestion. The Board classifies the pictures?

A. Yes.

Q. Why do you want a film expert for that?

A. As the Secretary. The members of the Board may be officials or non-officials, but the Secretary's work is important. If there is not much work for a full time man you can have a part time man in Lahore, and for Bombay you can have a full time man.

Q. I have not seen that classification. Is it done by the trade or by any official body?

A. Of course, it is an honorary society there, but in India honorary societies would not come forward because this is a new line.

Q. You say the trade submit itself to the honorary society's work? They allow their films to be censored and classified.

A. Not censored, but only classified.



**Q.** And they publish lists?

**A.** Yes. They issue regular reports.

**Q.** It is a private agency, a voluntary agency?

**A.** Yes. It is called the National Board of Review. You can write to them and find out the way they do it.

*Colonel Crawford :* I would like to hear some of your experience regarding training abroad. Both of you, I understand, have been abroad. You took training in all departments, Mr. Shorey? Mr. Rawley, you took training particularly as camera man?

*Mr. Shorey :* Technique of motion picture photography, as camera man at the same time, lighting system, studio management.

**Q.** Where did you go? To America?

*Mr. Rawley :* We went to America.

**Q.** Did you have any difficulty in getting your training?

*Mr. Shorey :* No. I had my training at different institutions. There is one City College in New York. I took the course of advanced photography consisting of motion picture photography.

**Q.** What sort of fees had you to pay?

**A.** This is a municipal college and they charge no fee for it. I had to pay in the New York Institute of Photography. I do not exactly remember what I paid. I think it was 150 dollars.

*Mr. Rawley :* They have now increased it to 250 dollars.

**Q.** For the whole course which will last for about six months?

*Mr. Shorey :* I was exempted from the preliminary course of photography. They examined me in the different departments and I only specialised in the high grade portraiture, light posing, and then in the motion picture photography.

**Q.** So your training was done in definite institutions?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Did you have any opportunity of being apprenticed to a studio at all?

**A.** I was working with Fox's.

**Q.** Had you to pay?

**A.** They employed me to represent India. After my graduation from those institutions they took me and used to send me out of the towns and cities with the camera men to watch their methods of taking films. I was given facilities to watch as well in other studios. While it was strictly prohibited for the public, they particularly granted me those facilities. At the same time I had facilities in another company named Sagawin. I do not know whether it is existing now.

**Q.** Are you of opinion that from the ordinary student's point of view there is difficulty, in so far as America is concerned, in his getting practical training after his theoretical training at the college? Would it be difficult for students going from here to America to get practical training?

**A.** It is not an easy thing.

**Q.** It is a pure matter of luck?

**A.** It depends on one's ambitions, how one could make his way.

**Q.** What would it cost an ordinary student desiring to take training?

**A.** It would take about Rs. 4,000 to 5,000 for the complete course.

**Q.** Not including his passage and living? Including everything?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** You think he could really get a course of training for about Rs. 5,000?

**A.** Between Rs. 5,000 and 6,000 he should get it.

**Q.** But you think he will find difficulty in getting practical training in a studio?

A. It is not very easy. It is not impossible at the same time, but it is not very easy for every one.

Q. From your experience would you prefer an opportunity to get training at the hands of experts in India?

A. To a certain extent, but that depends upon how many qualified persons there are in India who can give a scientific training, both theoretical and practical. Photography is considered to be very easy to pick up and they think they can learn it in one day. I would say that one has to devote a whole life time to it to become experts, like they do in engineering, medicine and other professions.

Q. You did not go to Germany?

A. No.

Mr. Rawley : No.

Q. I notice you make some recommendations here regarding the censorship of topical films. Would you be opposed to taking out a license for the taking of topical films? It does not appear to me that topical films really need censorship.

Mr. Shorey : In my opinion it should not need censorship, but at certain times certain incidents occur which are not always suitable to be placed in the market.

Mr. Green : Riots and such like things?

A. Of course, if the producer will put in a declaration that his film does not consist of any objectionable item there should be no hindrance to his film.

Colonel Crawford : You must have some control over them?

A. I mean to say that the control must not delay the topical interest of the film.

Q. Have you any idea of the cost of production of an entertainment film?

A. You mean dramatic films?

Q. Yes, take a dramatic film of about 6,000 feet.

A. In India I think it should cost a good film of the quality that I intend to produce— between Rs. 10,000 to Rs. 20,000,— a film of course which could be compared with foreign productions.

Q. Do you think there is an adequate market available in the Punjab for entertainment films if produced?

A. Yes.

Q. What sort of hire would you get for a particular film?

A. Ordinary rates. If we produce one popular story, I think that film would bring at least Rs. 60,000.

Q. From the Punjab alone?

A. Yes. The story should be so popular that even the villagers will come and see it.

Q. We understand in the smaller theatres the films can only be hired out for about Rs. 40 a night.

A. That depends on the quality of the films. Good films are always hired on a percentage basis.

Q. You have 28 cinemas in the province?

A. Yes, and apart from these there are travelling companies too.

Q. Your evidence is, that so far as this is concerned, there is an adequate market in the Punjab for Indian productions?

A. Yes.

Mr. Green : I take it both of you gentlemen are confident in the future of the industry and in your own ability to produce films?

Mr. Rawley : Yes, we are confident.

**Q.** Have you ever worked out detailed figures of cost of production?

*Mr. Shorey :* In the beginning we will have to build up our studio.

**Q.** I am asking this for a purpose which you will see shortly. Have you actually worked out your costs?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** You have worked out your probable revenue?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Have you ever laid these facts before either a financier or before the public in the shape of a prospectus for a limited company?

**A.** Individually we have approached certain persons privately.

**Q.** That is to say, to lend you money?

**A.** Just to come forward and invest their money for profit in our business.

**Q.** Did you try to get working capital by actually floating a company?

**A.** You mean joint-stock? We are now trying.

**Q.** You have produced one or two films now?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** You are producing a comic film. I may tell you that expert American opinion is that the field at the present moment for comic films is very great. If you show these films you will have a good chance of floating a company.

**A.** That is the only way we see at present. We contemplate showing our educational, topical and comic films and then trying to raise some funds.

**Q.** You have heard that Bombay is producing films and their figure of cost of production is very similar to what you have stated just now. We have it on evidence in Bombay that those companies, which have received no Government subsidies whatsoever, are not only making a profit but making a handsome profit. They are getting back all the capital sunk in the film and a bit more sometimes in six months. Is there anything inherent in the Punjab which prevents you from doing what Bombay has done?

**A.** Personally I believe they are not making quite a good amount of profit because their productions are not quite as satisfactory as they ought to be, compared with the foreign productions.

**Q.** It may interest you to hear that we have had actual figures from the amusement tax, which are pretty conclusive.

**A.** Here in the Punjab we very seldom see Bombay pictures.

**Q.** I can understand a Bombay film not appealing to the Punjab, but what I want to know is whether a Punjab film would not appeal to the Punjab?

**A.** A Bombay film would appeal to the Punjab as well, because, after all, they produce on some religious basis, or some historical stories. So they will appeal all right. I have seen some of their productions and they bring in quite a good house although their quality is poor.

**Q.** There is only one other point. You talked about classification under dramatic headings. I am not quite clear about it. I gather you say in America a certain film may be classed for married women only? Is not that rather an attraction for other classes to go and see that particular film?

*Mr. Bartley :* Yes. I told you that one film cannot satisfy all the classes. When you are told that a particular film is for a particular class you cannot then complain that the censorship has not been strict and so on.

**Q.** Will the public pay any attention to that?

**A.** In that case the public cannot raise any objection.

**Q.** Do you think it would be practicable in India for a Board of Censors to pass a film of a very advanced reformer in religious spheres and also at the same time publish a warning, "No one is to see this except people who are equally advanced"? Do you think a warning of that nature might enable the censor to pass certain subjects which they cannot at present pass?

**A.** Yes.

*Chairman :* Have you got any copy of such a classification with you?

**A. No.**

*Mr. Green :* I have seen some such thing in trade papers.

*Mr. Neogy :* We have been told that in the Punjab if the industry is assured of some Government patronage then capital could be found from private parties.

*Mr. Shorey :* Yes.

*Q.* You have been doing some work in this line. Supposing the Local Government were to develop a definite scheme of film publicity in future in connection with their various departments, and supposing they were to assure you or any other firm in the Punjab that they would get all that work done through the indigenous studios here, not necessarily your studio particularly, but through the indigenous studios here, don't you think that that itself would attract private capital?

*A.* I cannot definitely say, but so far we are thankful to Government for their help by patronising us in their different departments . . .

*Q.* The very fact that a substantial Government custom is assured to you—would that in any way enable you to make a more successful appeal to the private capitalist?

*A.* I think so. Besides this, Government should also grant us land facilities to build up our studios.

*Q.* Have you ever made any definite proposal to the Director of Industries or any other Department of Government in regard to this matter?

*A.* I once attempted it and applied to the Director of Industries. Of course, they have not so far answered, but verbally I understand that they will not be prepared to grant land for building a studio, of course, at our own cost.

*Q.* How do you then expect Government to take up your cause and find capital for you from England? If they are not prepared to do this much here in the Punjab, how do you expect Government to get money for you from England?

*A.* It is for the mutual benefit of both. We belong to one Empire and with the co-operation of other parts of the Empire we can develop our industry.

*Q.* In England there is a film industry already?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* And they can invest their money there.

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Besides you support a scheme of Imperial preference. Under that they would be in a position to get their films shown in India more easily than the other foreign films. So they would be assured of a market here under your scheme, and why should they at all care to invest capital in India?

*A.* They will.

*Q.* Supposing they were to encourage Indian Industry, would not your position be that of a rival in the trade?

*A.* It should not be, because we produce only films of Indian character, while it is not easy for any westerner, either in England, Germany, France, or America. I have seen some of the American productions on Indian characters and I should say they are not quite successful because they do not understand Indian ways and customs properly. It is only the Indians who can do that.

*Q.* Have you tried to interest any Englishman in this?

*A.* So far I have not.

*Q.* Your idea is to depend entirely on Government efforts?

*Mr. Shorey :* To begin with, and then the public will follow.

*Mr. Coatman :* Apart from the work you do for the Government and to the order of Indian States you produce a certain number of topical films?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* When you have got your film ready how do you dispose of it? Have you ever sold any of them to exhibitors?

A. The topical films I prepare—most of them I do on orders. Sometimes I prepare them of my own accord.

Q. Have you sold or rented any of those which you have prepared of your own accord?

A. Yes.

Q. How many theatres did you rent them to?

A. 4 or 5 theatres.

Q. What remuneration did you get?

A. That would not cover even my investment on the particular film.

Q. In fact you have incurred a loss?

A. But I make up my money by selling the negatives in England and America.

Q. You send some to England and America?

A. Just a portion of it. I send the complete length of the film, but they just pick out the most suitable and interesting part. They do not buy the whole length.

Q. How often has any length of your film been purchased in England or America in the past?

A. About ten times; almost every time I sent them. We judge what films will be interesting and we send films that will be to their taste.

Q. When you send your topical films that you prepare on your own, not to order, do you hawk them round?

A. We have not many films of our own. When we have Parades, Reviews, the Commander-in-Chief's Visit, etc., of course they cannot find a good market in every theatre.

Q. Now, you pass certain strictures on capitalists and banks. You say they do not come forward and put money into the industry, therefore you want Government help. Now, how do you actually visualise the giving of that Government help? What I mean is, in what shape exactly should Government give that help?

A. I think it will attract public help to our concern if we get a piece of land and Rs. 25,000.

Q. You personally?

A. For our concern.

Q. But what about the other producers in Bombay, Calcutta, Benares and so on?

A. When we establish a good name before the public, the public will naturally buy our shares.

Q. But why should Government give it to you rather than to A., B., C., or D.

A. I mean the Government should give help to the province, and in the province we are running this.

Q. That is very vague.

*Chairman:* There is the New India Film Co.

A. Yes, they also deserve help.

Q. Supposing there was another company?

A. To my knowledge there is no other company.

*Mr. Coatsman:* When you say Government, do you mean the Central Government or the Provincial Government?

A. The Provincial Government.

Q. Then the Government help you really want is hard cash or the equivalent of hard cash such as land?

A. And the guarantee of orders; circulars may be issued to different departments for this purpose.

**Q.** Let us confine ourselves to the finance. You want Government to give to individual producing concerns financial help?

**A.** Yes, a certain amount may be fixed and distributed to various different concerns in the province.

**Q.** Have you ever contemplated how much money will be wanted in your own province, the Punjab, in order to set up the producing companies?

**A.** I think about Rs. 50,000.

**Q.** But the industry has got to fight against films from America and you said Madan's are up against you with a capital of 80 lakhs.

**A.** I think we can compete with them because so far their quality is not up to the standard as it ought to be. They are running the business with a big capital. I don't know why it is so, but we see that their production is not up to the standard as it should be.

**Mr. Neogy :** Their Indian productions?

**A.** Yes, their Indian productions.

**Mr. Coatman :** I think you said a short time ago that you would want Rs. 40,000 to fit out a studio?

**A.** I think a first class studio could be built up for Rs. 40,000.

**Q.** And the Rs. 50,000 that you contemplate as Government help would go into that studio?

**A.** The studio could be built on a smaller scale at first and improved by and by. One studio could be sanctioned for both the New India Film Company and our Company.

**Q.** I think you have to revise your notion about the amount of help required from the Government. Rs. 50,000 comes to about £4,000. Surely you could not build up a flourishing industry on that?

**A.** On that we can make enough profit to attract the public.

**Q.** I think you are thinking of your own personal case. Well, we cannot think for you. We as a committee cannot make recommendations to the Legislative Assembly in your favour. We have got to think of the industry now. You have not given any serious thought to the amount of financial assistance that would be necessary from Government in order to build up a strong, stable, progressive cinema industry, have you?

**A.** So far as the Punjab is concerned I have not, but thinking for myself and the New India Film Company I think that would do.

**Q.** Well, I think out of all this we will agree that a fairly large amount of financial help will have to be forthcoming.

**A.** This will go a very long way.

**Q.** For you personally, but have you considered whether the financial help should be given once for all or whether it should be continuous?

**A.** It is not necessary to be continuous, because we will get a good start and we will be on our own legs.

**Q.** Just so, but suppose the Government finds that you are losing its money. What about that? What is the Government to do then?

**A.** There is no reason why we should. When the Government advances us money naturally there will be some Government control over it to see that we are spending the money in the right way.

**Q.** How will Government exercise that control?

**Mr. Green :** You are the experts, not Government.

**A.** Some Government official can keep an eye on the business.

**Mr. Coatman :** In any case if Government gives you and Mr. A., B., C. and D. a certain amount of money now, other claimants will come forward for money also. There will be all sorts of requests.

**A.** The money should only be given to recognised firms, firms who have already established a name. Of course a lot of people will come forward.

**Q.** You are contemplating the Provincial Government taking the place of a commercial bank—aren't you?

**A.** I do not know how to put it.

**Q.** But isn't that so? After all, if you are going to get Rs. 50,000 for your studio from Government, you have to give the Government some security?

**A.** The security is our skill in the business.

**Q.** But that is very intangible.

**A.** We have to satisfy Government that there is enough skill and every probability of developing the industry.

**Q.** That is what the banks call not tangible security.

**A.** The banks want solid security.

**Q.** Where does the Government get the money from?

**A.** The Government can pay from the same sources as for educational purposes.

**Q.** The taxpayer's pocket? Do you think it is fair to ask the taxpayer to pay money to you?

**A.** It is for their interest, their education, their advancement.

**Q.** But they are already getting films?

**A.** What films?

**Q.** Lots. All sorts of films are being produced in Calcutta and Bombay.

**A.** They are not sufficient for educational purposes, mostly drama.

**Q.** Now are you contemplating getting this financial interest from Government free of interest?

**A.** Of course there should be some interest.

**Q.** An ordinary commercial rate of interest?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Government would naturally demand some tangible security. If you have tangible security and a fair rate of interest you can get the money from the bank?

**A.** If we have tangible security why should we depend on such help which may or may not be given us. We can easily go to the Imperial Bank or some other bank.

*Chairman:* You would do what Australia does in the case of her industries that deserve Government help, give easy terms, long terms, easy interest, not on a commercial basis, merely to help the industry.

**A.** Yes, that is the duty of Government.

*Mr. Coalman:* Is the cinema industry one which comes within that category?

**A.** The cinema industry is the most important to-day.

**Q.** Is it a key industry?

**A.** I should say yes, because education mostly depends, educational propaganda mostly depends, on that.

**Q.** Let us be quite clear on this point. We all admit, it is generally admitted that the cinema is a valuable instrument of education but when you say education mainly depends on it, surely that is going too far.

**A.** It is the most impressive way of imparting education in every direction.

**Q.** Is it the most impressive way? It is a good way, we all admit. You have got to regard it as one instrument of education.

**A.** It is the most useful instrument.

**Q.** Without the cinema education has gone on and it cannot take the place of all the other instruments of education.

**A.** It is this way, Sir. When there was no railway communication in India people were travelling long distances even then; but now that we have railway facilities why should we not use them?

**Q.** Well, we will not go into any long argument by analogies. I want to ask you if the cinema industry can really seriously be called a key industry like the steel industry. And talking of the steel industry reminds me how much the Government have had to put into it and we also remember how the Government have fostered the steel industry; direct monetary assistance had to be abandoned. Now that is a much more tangible industry than the cinema industry.

**A.** In its own way I think it is just as important for the purposes of general education.

**Chairman :** But would you consider that if for any reason Government takes steps to stop the supply of Western pictures then, in order to give amusement to the people, there is a duty on the Government to supply the need?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** The complaint now made is that Western pictures are rubbish, they produce all sorts of demoralising effects and therefore there should be stricter censorship and therefore you must stop the supply of Western pictures. Now, if you stop the supply from one source, you will create a supply in another quarter, and therefore, in order to effect that object, it becomes the duty of Government to spend money. Is that your point of view?

**A.** Yes.

**Written Statement of Mr. E. LASCELLES WIDDICOMBE, Managing Director, New India Film Co., Lahore, dated the 24th November 1927.**

1. Yes. I am a practical cinematographer and film producer having considerable experience of such work in India.

2. (a), (b) and (c) As I have no practical knowledge of the Exhibition side of the Industry, I do not feel competent to answer these questions.

3. Those which are of an exciting nature or which have a religious appeal. The latter is the case where the present Indian productions are concerned.

4. No. There is in the first place a lack of suitable films and in the second place the majority of the Cinemas in India are controlled by one firm who do not encourage the production of Indian films by other concerns, owing to their attitude in refusing to consider the same for exhibition on their circuit.

5. No.

(a) As a general rule no.

(b) Yes, but could be made much more so.

(c) It is more profitable to show Indian films provided that they are good.

6. (a) The cost of production of Topical News films will for a long time keep these out of the market except in so far as news of international importance is concerned and this, in order to cover production costs, has to be sent to Europe or America undeveloped, after which it will eventually reach India via the Topical Gazettes of other countries.

The minimum rate paid for this work is Dollars 2 per foot of accepted film. There are no expenses connected with the developing and printing and other finishing operations and the demand is steady.

Local theatres offer from Rs. 5 to Rs. 20 per reel of 500 to 1,000 ft. for topical films. The cost of production varies from Rs. 500 to Rs. 1,000 for covering big events and the foreign market value is lost when development is carried out in this country, as the film become unacceptable on account of the break in the Copyright.

The cinema is a means of amusement. The public pay to go in so that they may be amused and not instructed. The proper place for "uplift" and "instructional" films lies in the class room and public lecture hall, where they will be of the greatest possible value.



Given good Indian dramatic films, not "Americanised" productions, good photography and a little more comfort in the exhibition halls, the popularity of the cinema will increase, at the same time an advance in the state of the Industry will become possible.

The greater the demand, the cheaper the rate of production and the lower the rental chargeable in order to show a profit to the producer, hence the cheaper the price of admission.

(b) There should be a general all round appeal if the proper type of films are produced.

7. This is not in my province.

8. (a) No.

(b) The production side and matters relating to it will only be dealt with.

Firstly, there is a lack of financial backing owing to the somewhat precarious nature of such an investment and the large capital expenditure required to produce good results.

Secondly, there is the fact that the majority of the cinemas in the country are in the hands of certain combines, some of which will not exhibit films other than their own or those imported by them, thus closing the market for other producers.

In addition there is the action by certain Government Departments in making arrangements to make all their own films for instructional and publicity purposes, thus cutting off one of the surest means that films producers have at the moment of being able to ensure a small but steady income towards the high overhead cost of their film production machinery.

The next factor that has to be considered is the fact that, in the past, some of the larger film productions of this country have definitely proved a financial failure, thus affecting the whole of the Industry in the eyes of possible financial backers.

Lastly, it must be admitted that most of the productions of Indian concerns are poor and are of poor photographic quality, this latter in many cases being caused by forced rushing of the work in hand, either to recover the original outlay or owing to pressure from without.

9. This question chiefly concerns exhibitors, but in my opinion there is a great difficulty to be overcome in that it is extremely hard to get a regular supply of good Indian films.

10. Yes. See 8(b) above.

11. Exhibitors matter.

12. As for No. 11 above.

13. Suggest that all raw materials used in film production should be Duty Free.

14. Yes, Free "uplift," "Instructional" and other such film shows should be given, using Indian films only.

The demand for such films would then be from Official quarters.

15. Yes. Provided that it grows steadily from a small organisation. At the moment a big project on ambitious lines is foredoomed to failure, chiefly owing to the fact that there is only a very limited market open for its productions.

Let the market be extended and the project grow accordingly.

16. It is certain that they exist, but so far no real effort has been made to find them and those that have come to the surface are in many cases working against very great odds. The co-operation of the best brains of the country is required for this work and the interest of the leading writers and dramatists of the country should be enlisted. Good work, having all the good qualities of foreign films, plus a real live appeal to the Indian mind, will then result.

17. Yes. But only when production is less likely to failure and financial loss.

18. Yes. But only if it is based upon quality as well as quantity of output. See answer to No. 20(a) below, as to how this is to be done. The action should in the first place be administrative in order to make a supply of Indian films

available for exhibition. When this supply is assured, it should be legislative in order to enforce the exhibition of these films.

19. It is high. At the moment there are very few productions that can be classed as "productions" in the proper sense of the word. The Industry is still in the same stage of development as was the case in other countries at the commencement of film production and when costs were very small indeed. When the quality is considered in relation to the cost of production, the cost is far too high.

On the other hand, for certain types of film, *i.e.*, those for which an Oriental setting, etc., is required, the cost of such production is infinitesimal as compared with other countries.

Again, given proper management, organisation and improved methods, costs will fall and at the same time results will improve.

20. (a) Expenditure is required, but valuable material of a type, for which there is a growing necessity, will be made available thereby, in addition to benefiting the Industry.

Further, such expenditure need only be incurred in direct proportion to the benefits derived therefrom by both Government and the Industry.

(b) The formation of central and provincial funds by the pooling of the resources of all departments of which the use of films for Instructional or Publicity work is applicable.

This will prevent waste of effort, energy and money as would be the case if each department were to make its own arrangements as at present.

These funds should be utilised to purchase, at a definite rate, films of an instructional and informative nature, to exhibit these in public free of charge and carry out their circulation both in India and abroad.

The demand for these films should be steady and continuous over a long period, otherwise there will be a danger of the work being rushed and poor quality resulting, at the same time defeating the idea of the project, in that it is designed to assure producers of a steady income while the Industry is in its infancy, possible a matter of some years.

This project will make for a reduction in dramatic production cost and better results following the continuous employment of regular staff, both actors and technicians.

A financial saving will result owing to the possibility of being able to circulate more than one copy of any one film, thus spreading out the cost of production of that film over a larger area as opposed to the present system where the whole of the cost has to be borne by one copy.

21. This should be the last resort after all other methods have failed. Competition and originality have been the life blood of the Industry in all other countries where progress has been made.

With complete State control or a monopoly these die and with them all hope of any progress, beyond a continual drain on the resources of the country to meet the financial losses of the project.

22. Yes. On a reciprocal basis.

(a) Yes. But not until India can produce films suitable for exhibition abroad. There are but few of these at present owing to the low standard of technical work.

(b) Yes. But unless the preparation of such films is properly controlled the gain in this direction might be the opposite to that which is desired.

(c) Doubtful. But it would certainly tend to improve the Western portrayal of "Oriental" scenes as produced in Western Studios.

23 (a) A very great deal. The production of short lengths of films, each dealing with a separate subject and complete in itself. These films to be made available by Government for free exhibition throughout India and also copies sent by them to other countries for general exhibition, with special collections of such films for exhibition officially at such functions as the British Industries Fair: The Leipzig Trade Fair, the past Philadelphia Exhibition, etc.

This step would mean definite work for the Indian Film Industry and would extend regularly over a fairly lengthy period, thus augmenting the demand secured by the adoption of the plan suggested in Answer No. 20.

(b) Suggested the adoption of this plan by other Dominions and the formation of a Government Film exchange to deal with Information, Instructional, Educational and Propaganda films.

The co-operation of the Educational Departments of Dominions might be secured in order to get them to make use of such valuable Educational material in all schools, etc.

A very wide circulation would then be started and it is certain that, owing to the production of many copies of each film to meet the demand, the cost would be negligible in comparison to the widespread benefit that would result for all classes in all the Dominions.

Provided that the films are properly prepared, the demand will be automatic and the growth of such an organisation steady in response to the demands of the Educational Departments alone.

24. (a) Yes. Those of Western origin having social drama as their main theme.

Most audiences are chiefly illiterate and therefore cannot properly understand such films in their proper light.

See answer 27(a).

25. Yes.

26. (a) Yes.

27. (a) The chief trouble in connection with certain types of Western films lies in the fact that they are not properly understood and as a result, false impressions are made upon the minds of the audience, which, in some cases, will lead to bad results. The trouble is that this evil cannot be dealt with by censorship alone. Further the evil will grow very rapidly following any increase in prosperity of the inhabitants in any area owing to the fact that such increased prosperity will enable those, who were previously unable to attend cinemas through lack of means, now doing so and it is this type who are unable to properly understand such films.

The only method by which this evil can be dealt with is by elimination and not suppression. This calls for a supply of Indian films which have been suitably censored in respect of matters appertaining to Indian thought, ideals and opinions.

33. (a), (b) and (c) No. So far as Indian Films are concerned.

No evil results will occur if the work is in the hands of the proper persons, who by their education and outlook on life are able to forecast the effect that any questionable or other scene will have in the mind of the average audience.

Censorship should be extended to scenarios, thus eliminating a possible wastage of time, money and energy by producers of films which are doomed to failure by censorship or ruination of the continuity of the story by the excision or alteration of parts of the film after production is completed.

34. (a) I am in favour of the maintenance of a Central Censor Board for imported films which should be situated at their port of entry.

Until such times as the volume of work calls for it, small Boards composed of honorary members who are interested in the development of the film industry, but not connected with it, should be formed in film producing centres in order to deal with Indian films.

This step would relieve the central Board of considerable responsibility and work as, in the case of imported films, the work does not need such detailed attention owing to their having previously been submitted to censorship in their country of origin. The case of Indian productions is different, in that great care will have to be exercised; as well as a knowledge of all matters connected with the conditions of life which the film is purported to represent.

This step would be very beneficial to producers in that it would save expense and hasten the handling of the work of censorship.

40. Yes. Much more rigidly than the films themselves, as both literate and illiterate persons have such things thrust on their notice.

The exercise of common sense and an understanding of the matter on the part of the censor authorities is all that is required.

42. In my opinion the Trade is only too willing to co-operate if Boards take a constructive and helpful view of their work in connection with Indian films.

The boards will help to foster such co-operation by the rapid disposal of work, especially in the matter of important topical films, and will thus win the confidence of the trade.

The pre-censorship of scenarios will assist the trade even more as it may lead to a definite financial saving to producers.

44. The Press. The refusal to publish trade "write-ups" of film exhibitions, unless they are sure that they are true in substance.

Public Bodies. Assistance to producers by giving the free use of sites, police assistance, access to literature, etc., which would assist in the production of a good class of film.

In the case of railway Departments, limited free travelling facilities and some reduced fare travelling facilities to *bonâ fide* producers and their staff.

The granting of facilities for the filming of public events when asked to do so.

45. (a) Yes. But such control should be limited to registration of *bonâ fide* concerns and prevent mushroom growths which, by their ultimate failure or character of their work, might bring discredit of the Industry.

(b) Yes. See above.

**\*Oral Evidence of Mr. E. LASCELLES WIDDICOMBE, Managing Director, The New India Film Company, Lahore, on Friday, the 25th November 1927.**

Chairman : How long have you been at this film producing business?

A. About 2 years.

Q. I suppose you have got some other things to do or are you only concerned in this?

A. I am chiefly concerned in this. I am really trying to see the possibilities of it. I am more or less in the apprentice stage, so far as production is concerned.

Q. How have you qualified yourself for this work?

A. I have studied photography during a large period and picked up by reading and actually by personal experience with a view to later taking proper training.

Q. You mean you have been getting practical knowledge as much as you can in the country?

A. Yes.

Q. What is your other business?

A. I was originally trained as an aircraft engineer but there being no opening in these days for that sort of thing I had to fall back on something else.

Q. You think there is a bright future for this industry?

A. I certainly think so.

Q. Have you produced many films?

A. I have been chiefly on educational and instructive films so far.

Q. Under the orders of Government?

A. Yes.

Q. Just like the other people are doing?

A. I have tried the other business of taking larger films as a speculative business but found it unsatisfactory at the moment.

**Q.** You mean, having produced films you could not find any one to take them?

**A.** There were various reasons which made it an unprofitable business.

**Q.** You mean, you could not get exhibitors to exhibit them?

**A.** That is the trouble.

**Q.** Here in Lahore?

**A.** I went down before taking one film to Calcutta and tried to arrange previously for its exhibition and they would not consider any proposal at all; and secondly until one can produce a really good piece of work it is impossible to expect people abroad to buy it, and the money lies there.

**Q.** I can understand that. But India is such a large field; if you are able to produce for India, can you not do anything provided there are theatres?

**A.** Yes, if theatres are available and provided that renters realise the cost of production, which lies not only in raw material but in time and skill.

**Q.** I suppose you know that in Bombay the film production is thriving?

**A.** Yes, I have been down there.

**Q.** They do not seem to have any difficulty in finding a market.

**A.** They have got over that stage but it is still only a limited market.

**Q.** I mean, why couldn't you try the same as they do in Bombay, not aim at perfection but at tolerably good films with an Indian story and an Indian setting?

**A.** Well, the trouble is a local one on account of local conditions, and even some of the Bombay productions are not very popular owing to their quality. Up here you first of all have got to compete in the crude film line with the existing concerns which are thriving and are well represented; and so the solution seems to lie in improving one's work.

**Q.** You do not think the Bombay pictures find a really very ready market when they come to the Punjab?

**A.** Well, I was asked to represent two companies and on going into it on paper first I found it was rather a risky proceeding.

*Mr. Green:* Represent them as distributors?

**A.** Yes, it is a line I have no intention of touching but the proposal was put up and I went into it before plunging into anything.

*Chairman:* But I mean, if you produce fairly good Punjab films you can capture the Punjab theatres so far as Indian audiences are concerned? I do not mean you cannot capture the fashionable side also, whether Indians or Europeans.

**A.** I even doubt that, Sir, because even the cheaper Western films are so good technically that the most illiterate audience has developed some taste for the good film and I believe in certain cases where films are exhibited they make forcible representations about the photography; so one must improve the quality to compete with anybody.

**Q.** I see two Indian pictures are being shown here, "Shirin Farad" and "Laila Majnu." Apparently then the Indian film from Bombay is making its way here.

**A.** Yes, but it is only just making its way.

**Q.** We had almost conclusive evidence in Bombay that notwithstanding the taste created for Western pictures in the first instance in Indian quarters, the Indian film has destroyed that taste.

**A.** It will, provided you can get into the mind of the people.

**Q.** So you must create the taste for Indian films by showing them.

**A.** And that taken further will avoid a lot of this trouble that is at present happening about religious differences. When the bulk of the Indian audience has acquired a view of the screen life which the Indian film trade has to build up for them, just as it has built it up in the West, then all these petty religious

troubles will automatically disappear without any laws and regulations and things like that.

*Q.* You think therefore that from that point of view the production of films in this province is of primary importance?

*A.* Well, so far as supply is concerned. I mean, it is not of primary importance to the province but it is to the trade.

*Q.* You mean to the industry really?

*A.* Yes, to the industry.

*Q.* But why do you say it is not also of primary importance to the Government as dealing with the public?

*A.* I think it is of primary importance to the public life.

*Q.* And to secure a healthy public life, that is the duty of Government?

*A.* Yes, and to do that you want a properly produced film.

*Q.* Healthy guidance is of supreme importance from various points of view. For instance we heard complaints this morning and yesterday that it is introducing a slow poison which is likely to manifest itself and all that. If danger is to be avoided, good healthy guidance is needed. It is up to the Government to supply healthy films or to see that they are supplied.

*A.* No, I don't think it is. It is up to the people concerned financially with the industry in the first place to make some effort to capture the market.

*Q.* Why should they when they can get cheap Western films? Why should people who are only financially interested take the trouble to do it?

*A.* Because I think in the end they will gain by it.

*Q.* But do you mean to say a man always looks to the end and not the beginning?

*A.* When one builds a business one does not build it in a day.

*Q.* Still, supposing you are going to make profits in 10 or 20 years, you won't go on with a concern which will be losing every year till then. So that is the difficulty, if there were no foreign competition (supposing you stopped all foreign films), it may be easier to develop the thing in the way you want?

*A.* It would be easy but the development would not be so satisfactory or healthy.

*Q.* Because you want something to compete with?

*A.* Yes, you must have competition.

*Q.* So it won't do to stop Western films and at the same time it is essential to produce Indian films. Under those circumstances do you expect private agencies to be taking any risks on this enterprise?

*A.* Yes, I think they would.

*Q.* And then to what extent do you think the Government should support this indigenous film industry?

*A.* Well, by confining their purchasers of films for instructional purposes to the Indian film industry.

*Q.* Of course you are now thinking of the present. Supposing there were 7 or 8 companies working as in Bombay. Do you think that would be sufficient?

*A.* There is such a vast amount of work to be done that for the present . . .

*Q.* You would allow free competition in that also?

*A.* Yes, because Government is not going to buy bad work and this is a matter for the trade to decide who is going to get that. I suppose you will have annual tenders. Bombay also can tender and offer to produce here. You have only two firms here now producing in the Punjab. No doubt the competition is not much but once the Government says we will give our orders for producing our pictures, then of course people will come forward and there will be competition.

*Q.* Do you think this will secure the best results for the Government?

A. I think it will. In the first instance the Bombay concerns will probably find it would not pay them to go outside their sphere because of the local demand.

Q. And local competition will not be keen at the start, but it may come when they find A and B flourishing under Government patronage?

Mr. Green: Very likely mushroom firms will spring up.

A. That must be guarded against, but you guard against it by insisting on quality.

Chairman: Quality is a matter on which there can be difference of opinion. I see from your note that Government should not embark upon producing their own films, they should entrust their work to private agencies. Supposing both of you combined,—you are the only two firms in the field, supposing Government lay down such a policy and both of you say we will do it at Rs. 5 a foot. Then the taxpayer has to suffer. You are the only two here and you can easily combine and dictate your own terms to Government.

Mr. Contman: If that happened don't you think it would correct itself by bringing other people from outside.

A. If the prices suddenly went up you would have a flood of people coming in from Bombay and Calcutta.

Q. Here it is a question of Hobson's choice. If we advise the Government "Please don't embark on producing your own films; there are two firms here who can do it" it would be easy for you to combine.

A. I am rather against the idea of combining because I think the quality of the work will suffer. We will say we are certain of getting this and there are very many reasons why one should run separate shows.

Q. If you have any objection, you need not answer the next question. How much capital have you put into this concern?

A. About 20,000 rupees.

Q. Have you got a studio?

A. No.

Q. And you have no actors and actresses?

A. No.

Q. Have you got a printing machine and all that? Have you got modern machinery for printing and developing?

A. Yes.

Q. You are going to do all the work up to editing? You will develop and give them up in reels? You will do all the processes yourself?

A. Yes.

Q. Have you got modern machinery?

A. It is the best that I could get in the country at the time and with the money available.

Q. You know in Bombay they are going in for very modern things?

A. I have seen some modern machines but then, as in ordinary photography, you can produce better results with a Rs. 5 camera than with one which cost Rs. 250.

Q. That is another thing the Government should be satisfied with, that you are well equipped before they give you their orders.

A. The thing should be run on a proper contract basis.

Q. Do you want them to give you financial aid to equip yourself?

A. No.

Q. You only want their contracts and they should be satisfied that you have got the proper machinery for it.

A. The contracts should be at a minimum rate, something that will give us some incentive.

Q. Although they may be able to produce it cheaper themselves?

A. Well, if they could produce the same sort of thing.

Q. If they could, you would lay an obligation on the Government.

A. Provided the difference is not too great.

Q. What is the public good to be gained by making two people live out of 320 millions?

A. No, it is to make the people carry on so that they can produce Indian films on their own resources.

Q. You would couple it with the condition that they should not be only content with producing Government orders but also produce other films?

A. Yes, they must do something in return as a sort of safeguard.

Q. Not merely leaving them, as now, to do only Government work and nothing else?

A. There is no object in that.

Q. I understand that point of view. I suppose you really must have more theatres before the cinema industry in the country develops?

A. I think it is a trade matter.

Q. You mention here that some industry proved a failure. What was that?

A. There were some factories and small industrial concerns which proved a failure, I don't mean the film industry.

Q. Because in the next sentence you say that "the factor to be considered is that in the past the film production in this country has definitely proved a failure"?

A. There I am speaking of the film called "The Light of Asia."

Q. We heard that it was a great financial success, and that it had an excellent reception in England and on the continent?

A. I know something about it, because, at the instance of the producers, I tried to dispose of it in America, in spite of the fact that some one went over there and tried to rent it out in America. We could not dispose of it, and it is still locked up in the Bank. It was a great financial failure. I have been working actually on a contract for the people who produced it, and they complained to me that they lost money on it.

Q. Do you notice any improvement in Indian films?

A. Yes, they are improving. I was in Poona and I saw some work actually from the technical side, examining the negative and so on.

Q. You think the conditions in your province for producing films are quite good?

A. Yes.

Q. Whether the Government produce or you produce, you think it is essential that educational and instructional films should be produced?

A. Yes.

Q. You also think that the film industry should be helped by Government as a whole?

A. Yes, by the purchase of films.

Q. Supposing the Indian Government determined upon giving some aid, financial or otherwise, would you confine it to Indian companies, or you would give such help to any foreign companies? If such companies are started, say, by Americans or Britishers in this country, do you think such aid should be given to them or should it be given to Indian companies in order to develop the Indian industry?

A. It is a national matter, and such aid should be confined to Indian concerns first.

Q. Or at any rate to concerns in which the Indian interests predominate, —it may be a combination but Indian interests must predominate?

A. Any concern must be a combination.



Q. You think that such aid should be given to Indian concerns first?

A. Yes.

Q. You think the cost of production of a good film here will not be as large as it is in America or elsewhere?

A. It is a very hard thing to compare the cost, because in some of these oriental settings made in America, the cost has been enormous, and with that sum we could probably have produced three or four films of the same length and of the same type in this country. My point is, it is less costly to produce films here.

Q. In answer to question 22 as regards the Imperial Conference you say that on a reciprocal basis, if it could be an advantage that can be done, and you also recognise that at present Indian films are not of international value outside the country?

A. That is my experience gained when trying to dispose of films. There again the exhibitors complain about the quality. But the improvement needed is very slight, and we could then make a start. Originally one could sell a film from India at the beginning of the industry purely on the interest of the thing because it was out of the ordinary, but now people are so critical that they must have a good film.

Q. So in adopting any such policy as is advocated by the Imperial Conference one will have to move with caution?

A. Otherwise you will bring discredit on the industry and make matters worse. My point is that if private agencies are left uncontrolled and they send off any number of films under a quota system, unless some careful inspection of them is made, we might, instead of spreading a good knowledge about the country, be sending stuff which would create a bad impression.

Q. And we have also to act with caution in getting any stuff?

A. Yes.

Q. It is very easy to say "till the Indian industry is able to stand on equal terms with other parts of the Empire." There is no good saying that you will have British Empire preference and all that because it will only mean transmission of money from America, perhaps, to Britain, or to some other country, it will only be a change of venue which will not be any real advantage to the country. So that the first effort should be to develop the Indian industry?

A. Yes.

Q. I don't understand this sentence of yours in 27 (b) where you say "the only method by which this evil can be dealt with is by elimination and not by suppression". What is your idea?

A. I mean censorship. If you can replace the things by Indian films, that will be an effective way of dealing with such misrepresentation such as there is.

*Mr. Coatsman:* In evidence given before us yesterday and to-day, we have heard reference to a film showing the evils of usury which was shown by the Registrar of Co-operative Credit Societies. I believe you produced that picture?

A. Yes.

Q. Would you explain briefly the arrangements you made with the Registrar for the production of that film?

A. It was on a contract basis. I contracted to do the photography myself. As I considered that I had no one available, I did the direction also myself, though I thought that being an Indian film it was essential that the direction should be by an Indian who knew the mentality of the audience and also the finer details. This was done on a contract rate, and I had an approximation as to length. The actual payment was made on the finished and accepted film after it had been measured. The actors were supplied by the Co-operative Society, and the direction was also done by an Indian official. The scenario was also written by an Indian, but I am not quite

certain if he was a co-operative official. There were occasions when I had to give a little assistance sometimes in telling what the picture looked like on the screen and things went on very satisfactorily. I found that the actors, who had never done any kind of acting before, did very good work, chiefly because they were not worried by the camera and also because they were carrying out and depicting every day tasks. The audience who saw the films could understand at once the whole theme, although there were no titles at all, because they were seeing every day life and the film did not suffer at all from any western influence.

*Q.* I was surprised when I was told that the leading actor was an amateur. You say that you found those arrangements satisfactory as far as the production of the films was concerned?

*A.* To a certain extent, yes. But it was an experimental measure and owing to various reasons we were very much rushed for time. I think it would have been much better if we had a little more time at our disposal. I do not consider that the photography is as good as it should be. It could have been improved if there had been more time available. I may say that in preparing the films I had to expose 1,200 ft. of negative film in one day and there was no time, we had to turn out probably a thousand feet a day. In any future work, I am rather inclined to contract for the direction and supply of actors. It will be a definite saving in production cost.

*Q.* In your written statement you talk about the results of Government control of the industry. Can you back up what you say by actual examples?

*A.* I said that probably by continual drain on the resources of the country it would make up the deficit.

*Q.* Perhaps in reply to the Chairman you talked about competition?

*A.* I have here an extract from the local press relating to a Government tannery which had to be closed down after running for some time. They were anxious to get rid of it, because obviously it was not a paying proposition. These sort of notices are constantly appearing in the press. I go about the country to a large extent, and I see there are several textile and other concerns which are not doing well.

*Q.* I gather from the tenor of your written statement and your replies to the Chairman that you believe that industrialists should get into the ring as it were and fight for themselves?

*A.* Yes, they will have to do it. Government, of course, can help the industries as far as is reasonable in order to safeguard the industry.

*Q.* Have you tried to produce any dramatic films for general renting?

*A.* No, because I saw at the moment that my own work was not going to be of a sufficiently high grade nor could I find the necessary time with the other work in hand to produce a film that would have sufficient market value to the man who has got to pay me for it, and I thought that I should probably be ruining the production and also any future hope of dealing with exhibitors, because if you once get a bad name in producing films, there will be a general impression that all your productions are bad.

*Q.* What scope do the Indian States afford for work of your kind?

*A.* They have a general impression that all that one has got to do is to get a good camera and also the necessary film stock to produce the films. As a result, many of them have spent large sums of money in buying most expensive cameras and equipment, some of which I have used. At last they feel quite disappointed and they say that they have spent so much money that they would not like to have anything more to do with films.

*Q.* We have heard some evidence about the production of instructional films. It may often require a highly qualified technical man to produce a particular kind of instructional film, and he may require other qualifications too to produce an ordinary dramatic film or other film. Is it not so? Is any special skill or technical knowledge required for producing these films?

*A.* I think it is quite hopeless to expect a man who can handle a camera to be a scenario writer. He must have a general education, and probably

some experience in instructing himself, using films if possible, to be able to appreciate what the technical expert for whom you are preparing a film is driving at. He will point you out one or two important factors in the machine and then leave you to go the best way you can, and if you are not used to doing that kind of work, one is apt to make a mess of things. In the case of agricultural films, one should have time to read up something about the subject.

*Q.* We have also heard something about the film monopoly. Could you tell us anything about the local effects of that alleged monopoly?

*A.* I saw the effects last night. There was one extremely good film called "Rupert of Hentzau" which actually belonged to this monopoly. I think it is one of the best American productions; it is of a type that any audience can see, whether they are literate or not. That film has been held by the monopoly and run all over the circuit actually. It has been shown here six times, and the other people outside the ring rented it at an enormous cost. But now it is in such a state of disrepair that I got a headache by looking at it for about three hours,—not because of the machinery,—but because the film was absolutely worn out. The monopoly got hold of the key picture and controlled the market.

*Chairman:* What do you suggest should be done to overcome this difficulty?

*A.* When the industry has developed, I think it might be possible to do something.

*Q.* You cannot prevent a man with a large capital from buying where he likes?

*A.* It is the present difficulty that we are up against, and we have got to find some solution.

*Q.* As a business man would you advise any solution?

*A.* The only solution is to float a concern with a bigger capital and buy up all the films, or else produce better ones yourself; then you will have a fighting chance.

*Mr. Neogy:* Have you made any attempt to secure capital from England for your concern?

*A.* I have not made any definite attempt, because at the moment the market seems to be closed and this is more or less an experimental period. The time is not yet exactly ripe to launch into a big scheme. If sufficient work is obtained to keep me going the whole time, so as to cover my expenses and to leave me a certain margin, then I think by starting in a small way with the aid of a little capital that will come in normally, I could show what I actually could do; then the necessary capital will be forthcoming in India. For getting capital you will have to show the man who will interest himself in these sort of things what you can actually do by practical examples.

*Q.* You don't think there is much of a chance of getting capital from abroad for this industry?

*A.* I have been in touch with various people, but it is a question of one's being a long way. Also there are much better propositions in other countries where they could invest at better rates of interest. But in this matter, being an Indian concern, we ought to get Indian capital.

*Q.* Have you tried to sell your stuff to foreign countries?

*A.* Yes. I have sent off some undeveloped films to America.

*Q.* On what subjects?

*A.* Subjects of international importance, but the expense there to get an international event filmed is somewhat high at present. One's money is also locked up even if it is only a question of time. I have also not had the time to set the thing on a proper business footing.

*Q.* You succeeded in putting through some minor things?

A. Yes. I have had some inquiries for aerial films and things like that from London, and I sent about a thousand feet, but the cost was so great at the time that I have given up the idea of continuing that kind of thing because they will not pay a price which makes it worth your while.

Mr. Green: I think your written statement contains a very accurate diagnosis of some of the ills from which Indian producers are now suffering, and I take it that your chief point is that a limited market means poor production?

A. Also the question in production is that you have to recoup yourself on one copy or two copies at a time. With a limited market you can't afford to make better productions, and you cannot spread your overhead charges, and you have got to keep absolutely down to a minimum. That is to say, with better production and larger markets going hand in hand, the industry can be developed better.

Q. You mean that better production and larger markets go hand in hand?

A. Yes, they do.

Q. I also see that you say that development must be gradual?

A. Yes.

Q. I wonder if I could connect that with your answer to 8 (b) where you say that all Government funds that are at present used or intended to be used for propaganda by means of the cinema should be pooled. I suppose your object is the same there, namely, to get for the Government propaganda films wider markets and thereby reduce the cost of production?

A. And also, if possible, spread the expenditure over the industry as a whole.

Q. That is on the assumption that these films are to be produced by the existing producing companies?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you think that the present producers can make the kind of films required?

A. I think they are quite capable of producing the things that Government require.

Q. Is there a market for those films beyond this province?

A. There is, certainly. Actually the United Provinces co-operative people wrote and asked me about this. We had also an inquiry from Madras and from several other places about this particular film.

Q. Are you handicapped by not having a studio of your own?

A. It all depends upon visualising the studio for production. I may say that in the Co-operative Credit film I used a system which I saw in Poona of reflecting mirrors, but it requires a certain amount of practice. Considerable success is obtained by the adoption of that method.

Q. You think that by Government pooling their resources they will get what they want from companies, and I take it that naturally these companies will make a profit?

A. Yes.

Q. It has already been suggested that this is likely to bring into competition a number of mushroom companies, some of which at any rate will certainly fail?

A. But in one of my replies I have suggested the registration and licensing of all film concerns with a view to try and prevent the formation of such mushroom companies.

Q. How could licensing actually prevent it? You can hardly say to a particular producer "you will not succeed"?

A. The concern should be in running order for some time and produce actual results to get a license. It has got to start on its own with a definite object, and not merely to make a few instructional films.

**Q.** But then the risk is that we may be told that Government is encouraging particular firms, that they are showing favouritism and so on?

**A.** Any firm that can fulfil certain conditions or that can show definite results can be licensed.

**Chairman:** Supposing you had a qualified man who has gone abroad for the necessary training; after spending some time and money he returns to this country and wants to start a business here? Why should you judge merely by results? It may be by qualifications?

**A.** By qualifications.

**Q.** You want them to actually produce some films? You said just now that they should be judged by what they have produced.

**A.** That brings into consideration the financial element. If a man can exist on his own for a certain period and if he can show that he has some practical knowledge which will prevent his failure, then such a man deserves to come in.

**Mr. Green:** It has been suggested that with the pooling of Government efforts and resources, they should themselves bring out experts and start a studio purely for non-commercial purposes, that they should also let that studio out to commercial producers if time permitted, and that they should gradually, when they had trained a number of men in practical and up-to-date methods, abandon the studio in favour of local producers who would then be in a position to do the work which Government requires. How does that proposition strike you?

**A.** Well, I can give rather a parallel to that in the case of renting out an ordinary commercial studio. They raise a number of people who get together. They concoct a story, produce the scenario and gather the necessary funds to buy the raw material. They then rent out the camera equipment from the parent people and I have been present when some of these productions have been going on and probably it takes 5 or 6 or 7 days to do the work of one day, owing to internal difficulties,—differences and so on. And I think in a central studio, where you would probably have rival concerns on the same type of work, unless it was an extremely large concern, which means a big outlay, there would be administrative difficulties to be overcome. In so far as it will be a sort of training college for technicians, I think it is a most excellent idea except for scenario writers for the production of Indian films.

**Q.** I see. I am very interested in your answer. In your answer to 23 (b) to take you to another point. You make what I think is a novel suggestion, that there should be a Government film exchange for instructional, educational and propaganda films. I take it, by that you really mean Empire exchange?

**A.** I think even within each part of the Empire.

**Q.** But should those different exchanges exchange with one another as well?

**A.** Oh yes. There will be a central film dump in India, another one in South Africa, and another one in Australia, and they should be administered by Government officials and use these Government films which I suggest as a means of really subsidising the industry by results. You then have a market for copies of films and that increases the income.

**Q.** You propose expanding your market—37 (a)—you are in favour of the institution of a central censor board?

**A.** For all imported films.

**Q.** All imported films, wherever they come from? You say it should be situated at their port of entry. Does that mean Bombay?

**A.** The bulk does come at present through Bombay. After all, it is very much quicker to get it through Bombay and rail it to Calcutta.

**Q.** What is your idea of the position of the central board?—or shall I start this way—the volume of work at Bombay at present is 3½ hours a day,

mere film inspection, and I take it that if we have a central board it will have double that work. One can hardly inspect films continuously for 7 hours. What method of examination would you suggest in that case? It can hardly be honorary work?

A. No, there you have to have paid officials and a certain amount of outlay, I should imagine, will be necessary for projection machinery, reels, etc.

Q. All that will be in the nature of capital expenditure?

A. Yes.

Q. Are you in favour of—I don't know if you know the British system, which is to have four stipendiary censors, with a vice-chairman who is more or less a referee, doing full time work and every film is inspected by two at the same time.

A. I think that is rather important in this country owing to the main differences that one has to contend with, so far as the effect of films is concerned.

Q. You mean communal and so on?

A. Yes.

Q. You like the idea of having a board of stipendiary censors of whom two should view every film?

A. I am thinking now of the exhibitor. He will feel happier if he knows that the film has been passed by both sides.

Q. I take it you would have to retain the present power of local authorities to suspend a film?

A. Certainly.

Q. In addition to the central board, as you contemplate it, of these stipendiary censors, should there be an advisory board to whom differences of opinion and any doubtful points could be referred?

A. Yes, I think there probably would have to be.

Q. I am not anxious to press you on details if you have not thought it out.

A. It is really an exhibition matter and I am trying to stick to production myself.

Q. But for production you still desire provincial boards?

A. Yes, for production of Indian films.

*Colonel Crawford:* I take it, Mr. Widdicombe, that your actual position is that you are a professional camera man at present hiring yourself to producers, those producers being mainly the Local Government.

A. Yes, I hire my machinery and the whole thing.

Q. You are actually the camera man. You are not really in the ordinary sense of the term a producer?

A. Not at the present moment. I am making my way to do so.

Q. But as a producer would you not have to have 3 or 4 experts working with you—your director and camera man, your scenario writer, your editor? A producing company could not be carried on by one man? You want one expert in each line?

A. That is one of the main troubles at the present moment.

Q. I only want to know your actual position at the present moment. Have you heard that there is a great demand for Indian films by exhibitors?

A. Yes, there is. Provided the picture is a good one.

Q. What do you think of the technical work of the Bombay pictures?

A. I have seen some of them that are quite good. But some of them are not so good. They are rather mixed at present.

Q. Well, so far as I can gather from the evidence they cannot meet the demand for entertainment pictures—all the pictures they produce are taken up at once.

A. Yes.

Q. Well, it is quite possible that, if you started making entertainment pictures, you would find yourself completely occupied on that particular line. It is possible that you would find a bigger profit in that line.

A. Certainly.

Q. Do you think that producing companies are going to contract for Government work? Is there going to be as large a profit from Government work as would be secured from supplying the entertainment market?

A. Well, there is not so much profit as being assured an income to cover your running expenses. It does not matter whether I produce 500 feet of film or 80,000 feet in one month—I have still got to meet some very high expenses and if you are certain that even if you make one or two annas a foot you know that you are going to get a certain amount of film coming in—whether one of your productions falls behind the scheduled time—it is a better proposition to put up to any financier and also it makes organisation much easier.

Q. Provided you can get the definite and steady offer of Government work for a period?

A. You see, at present we get an enormous rush of work that is required at once. You must have sufficient staff to cope with that, and then everything tends to shut down for a long time, and it does not become profitable.

Q. I understand that the studios in Bombay are working 16 annas for the production of entertainment pictures. It is greatly a question of which is going to be the more profitable proposition?

A. Entertainment certainly, when you can produce these that are satisfactory.

Q. Then you would not have time for Government work?

A. I think it is much better to have a safe line of business.

Q. I only wanted to find out. Well, now, in answer to the Chairman, you said that you were in favour of foreign companies coming out here.

A. Yes.

Q. My object entirely throughout is to assist the Indian industry. To-day Indian capital is shy. Do you think that if the Punjab Provincial Government allowed a foreign company to start out here under a definite time limit and it was with its own capital able to make a success of it, that it would be an encouragement to Indian financial interests to come forward?

A. Yes, I have considered taking that step myself as a matter of fact. It probably would be an encouragement but there are many peculiar difficulties. The result would not be Indian films. You would have a westernised idea of Indian life which is probably going to do more harm than good.

Q. Is there anything to prevent that foreign company from appointing an Indian to guide them in this respect?

A. No, but as they are putting in money they would probably insist on their doing it in their own way.

Q. Still, I only put it to you, whether you do not consider that possibly the employment of a foreign company to come for a contract, a concession, for a short period, might encourage the Indian financiers to come forward and build up their own business.

A. But there should be no necessity if you give the work to the Indian industry as a whole.

Q. I was thinking of the entertainment side too.

Chairman: I suppose that would be the thin end of the wedge.

A. Well, I have heard certain proposals but I am keeping them off till I see how things develop.

Colonel Crawford: I only put it to you because you also say that Indian capital is very shy and it wants a lead. Would some system of that sort give

them a lead? I would like to know why "The Light of Asia" was rejected in America. Was it quality only?

A. Quality, and also it hadn't the right sort of appeal to the American public.

Q. It was not mainly the quality then. It was probably that it hadn't the right sort of appeal.

A. There is one way that I am trying to get over this difficulty and that is that Government suggest that in addition to the censorship of the scenarios, here, I propose to try and send scenarios to the foreign film buyers and ask them, "if I produce this particular film, will they take it". They will first read the scenario and give their expert opinion on it—otherwise one is going to risk losing money.

Q. You have done something in the way of taking topical films?

A. Yes.

Q. I notice that your minimum rate abroad is 2 dollars a foot. That is a good profit.

A. Yes, it is a good profit. Provided you had not to go too far afield. You see, these topical films must be of international news value and if I have to go to Ceylon or something, I have got to take about 500 feet and these people cannot use more than 50 to 100 feet.

Q. I suppose you are only paid for what they take?

A. Yes, and they are limited because they are in gazette form.

Q. Have you any suggestion with regard to the supply of topical films for display in India of Indian events? Have you talked the matter over with Madans at all?

A. Well, the trouble is, it is impossible to do any business under the present system.

Q. Madans own a big circuit, therefore they could show a topical film throughout their circuit.

A. Yes, they could. But they will not have anything to do with any one who does not deal with them.

Q. If they want a topical, how would they get a topical from the Punjab?

A. Well, they would send their own camera man who will be on the spot being paid as producer, and there would be probably no worry.

Q. I notice you say "good Indian dramatic films—not Americanised productions."

A. That should be "westernised".

Q. Well, most western films to-day are American. But is that a definite criticism of yours on the Indian film to-day?

A. I think it is. All those that I have seen and those that I have seen in production have been produced by people at great expense to themselves trained abroad and either consciously or subconsciously contain western ideas of portraying life. Now an Indian film should be Indian throughout and therefore we should build up an Indian idea of producing and that I am certain is available.

Q. You would not suggest that the western film had created a taste for a western type of sensational photography, and that the Indian producer has to cater to that taste?

A. Well, I am thinking more of action and setting. As regards spectacular material, that is a question of imitation of the existing staff and camera men.

Q. For instance, the American uses the expression "pep". Is it essential for Indian pictures out here—have they got to have American "pep", or have you got Indian "pep" of your own?

A. Certainly we have our own pep. I have here a scenario in draft of that type.

Chairman: Love making?



A. To a certain extent, provided it is not too crude.

*Colonel Crawford:* Your answer to 18. "The action should in the first instance be administrative in order to make the supply of Indian films available for exhibition." What do you mean exactly?

A. Well, I meant the action should be that the actual subsidising of the industry indirectly by the purchase of films should come first, to put your producers on a sound basis, and to help them to develop. Then they should be in a position to make their own dramatic films and then, as soon as the dramatic films are available, you can legislate, because, if you legislate at once, and there is no supply, it is useless.

**\*Oral Evidence of Diwan Bahadur Raja NARENDRA NATH, M.L.C.,  
Member of the Punjab Board of Film Censors, on Saturday, the  
26th November 1927.**

*Chairman:* Have you got a copy of the questionnaire? There are two or three points on which I should like to trouble you.

A. If you take the questionnaire seriatim I shall answer the questions as much as I can. On the first question I have no special experience. On the second question I can say something.

Q. Do you go to the cinema much?

A. Not much. I have not got time.

Q. What have you to say on the second question?

A. Educated Indian classes go there in larger numbers than illiterate classes, here in Lahore. The attendance is on the increase.

Q. The cinema is getting popular with the people?

A. With the young men.

Q. More than with the elderly people unless they go with their families?

A. Yes.

Q. Do Indian ladies go?

A. Yes.

Q. They go pretty often?

A. Of course, the purdah system is a handicap, but so far as the cinemas are concerned, the attendance of ladies is becoming larger and larger. The cinema is becoming popular.

Q. Have you seen any Indian films yourself?

A. No. Only lately I saw that co-operative credit film.

Q. But Indian social films which they produce in Bombay, Kolhapur, Nasik, Bengal and other places?

A. I have not seen any. My experience is confined to Lahore.

Q. Do you think that an effort should be made to produce Indian films in this country?

A. Yes, if they are not objectionable in other ways.

Q. You want healthy films?

A. Yes, and films that would not displease any particular class. For instance, that film about Swami Shradanandji's funeral was very much liked by Hindus, but I do not think the Muhammadans cared for it. At the same time it was not apt to displease the Muhammadans so much—they might be displeased, but it is a film that would not attract a lot of Muhammadan audience.

Q. You think topical films should be encouraged in this country?

A. Yes, if the topic is one which does not in any way displease any particular class.

Q. You think there is a chance of Indians taking to film producing in this province?

A. I cannot say. Of course, gradually these new industries are being patronised by Indians and they are making some progress, but I cannot say to what extent this film industry is making progress.

Q. They have not begun yet; except for the Government orders they have not done anything in this province. Under Government orders two firms are executing certain orders. Do you think something should be done by Government to encourage the growth of the Indian film industry?

A. Of course, Government help would be quite welcome to those who are interested in this industry, but it is an industry, in my opinion, that would not flourish on a very large scale. That is my view. It would not attract much capital, that is what I mean.

Q. Of course, you recognise it is a great factor for the amusement of the poor people?

A. Yes.

Q. In fact, it is almost the only amusement they get.

A. Yes, in towns, but the rural population has not been reached yet. I do not know whether it will be very much to their taste. The rural population is very ignorant and very illiterate, and I do not think that it will attract the rural population to a very great extent except, perhaps, the landowning class. We have the tenant class and the landowning class. The tenant class perhaps could not afford it.

Q. We have heard from a responsible official yesterday that perhaps the best way of keeping people away from mischief would be to give them the cinema. They spend their idle hours having recriminations against each other and plotting against each other, whereas if you give them the cinema or an amusement of that sort, it would be a good way of diverting their attention.

A. Yes, but the rural population is comparatively free from that point of view, at any rate, so far.

Q. As an experienced politician and ex-official, I want to know whether you think it is an industry on which public funds should be spent either by way of cheap loans or by way of other assistance.

A. We have an Act in the Punjab allowing loans from Government for industrial purposes, and that can be utilised for the purpose. But I do not know whether there will be frequent applications, whether the industry would to any great extent attract much private capital.

Q. They are making huge profits in America by the film industry.

A. I do not think there are the same prospects here.

Q. They are only 100 millions and we are about 320 millions and it appears to me it is bound to have good prospects. Any way you think it is a matter on which you must proceed with caution—the giving of Government aid?

A. Yes. If Government aid is asked for, it may be given by way of loans.

Q. But what is your opinion about the provisions of your Act? Are they sufficiently liberal to induce people to apply for loans? You have got only a short term of 5 or 6 years for repayment?

A. I do not think they are sufficiently liberal. They demand very high security.

Q. As a politician of experience I should like to know your opinion on this. I do not know if you have read the proceedings of the Imperial Conference of 1926,—Question No. 22.

A. I have not read the resolution of the Imperial Conference. But what is the policy?

Q. The policy, I may tell you briefly, is this. They say that the film is a powerful instrument for spreading ideas. At present, all the world over, America holds the field in the matter of the film industry. And so far as the British Empire is concerned, American manufacturers produce the films, they advertise their trade, they advertise their ideas, and it is thought that the time has come when the British Empire should make an effort, so far

as possible, on their part to replace the American films by Empire films. For that purpose each part of the Empire should make an effort to produce films which may be attractive, and exchange.

A. I think it would be a good thing. We would make ourselves better understood.

Q. And also we will understand other parts of the Empire better?

A. Yes. Now, of course, people in Australia or South Africa, or perhaps in America too, have got very erroneous opinions about Indians and Indian life. They have no idea as to the progress that has been made within the last 50 years.

Q. And also our ancient civilisation. They think we are a nation of coolies.

A. I think it would be a good thing to produce films which would show the real conditions prevailing in India now.

Q. The idea is that some sort of preference,—not exactly preference, but a reciprocal arrangement—should be made between the various parts of the Empire.

A. Yes. I should think it is a very good thing. We would learn something about the other parts of the Empire, from Australia, South Africa, and so on, and they would learn something from us.

Q. You know the objection to that is that this is introducing the doctrine of Imperial preference by the backdoor. In fact, our friend, Lala Lajpat Rai, spoke in the Assembly about that, and he pointed out that we are trying to introduce Imperial preference by a side door as it were through a small industry like this. So he objected to that sort of thing being done.

A. I am not much opposed either to Imperial preference.

Q. So long as India is well served, you will add that?

A. Yes.

Q. You must take care in entering into any such pact that India is well served and that Indian interests are safeguarded?

A. Yes.

Q. And if any possible means of exchanging ideas between the various parts of the Empire,—without sacrificing the interests of India,—could be devised, you are for it?

A. Yes.

Q. As regards the social aspects of the cinema, I dare say, you are familiar with the complaint made. There are three complaints made as regards the effect of the cinema in this country as it is now run. First of all, very great people, I mean, among Indians, have stated that it has a bad effect on the people of this country. Secondly, some of the western people complain that it lowers the western womanhood in the eyes of Indians and that a slow poison is being introduced into the minds of Indians, creating a disrespect or disregard for the western civilisation. And the third complaint is that the cinema or the methods shown in the cinema stimulate new forms of crime. These are the three things which are alleged as the effects of the cinema as it is now shown. You are a man of experience in the town and I should like to know your views.

A. I agree with the first, but not with the second and the third. I agree that it has a sort of demoralising effect on the young mind, but I do not think that it lowers the womanhood of the west in the eyes of the people here. As a matter of fact, all these things are looked upon as a concomitant to liberty and freedom, and female emancipation to which the coming generations of India themselves aspire. As regards new forms of crime, I am not aware of any new forms of crime that have been stimulated by these shows.

Q. You do think that there is some substance in the complaint about demoralising effect?

A. Yes, on our young men. At the same time I would not interdict this sort of amusement for this reason, that it is taking the place of some other amusements which have an equally bad effect, for instance, *nautches* of dancing girls. They have become quite sparse now. There is no music now.

Q. You do not regret it?

A. I put it this way: nothing has taken its place.

Q. Of course, nautch girls are becoming unpopular but the cinema is becoming popular.

A. They are becoming unduly unpopular.

Q. A sort of mock puritanism, rather than real puritanism?

A. Yes. So I would not interdict this sort of amusement. I would chasten it if I could.

Q. Two things have been suggested as a remedy. One is the production of more Indian films, and the other is a little more strict method of censorship. Do you agree in that?

A. Yes. At the same time there is nothing more calculated to appeal to the emotional side of human nature than love.

Q. You cannot avoid love?

A. Yes. If you make strenuous efforts to avoid love you take away a great deal of the emotional part.

Q. The amusement part of it?

A. Yes. That demoralising effect to which I have referred may be put up with to a certain extent, may be tolerated.

Q. Do you think the demoralising effect is due to the cinema or is due to the new conditions which are coming into the country?

A. It is due to the cinema in so far as those new conditions are brought prominently before the public view, but, of course, it is due to the new conditions. We in India—for instance, seldom or in very few cases such things have come into existence now,—but we in India do not know of love preceding marriage. In fact, as you know, *Gandarva vivaha* is not the best kind of *vivaha*.

Q. And you think the love which is created under our system is more lasting than the love which precedes marriage? At any rate it is my opinion.

A. Yes.

Mr. Green: You have not experienced one of the other kind at all. (Laughter.)

Witness: Love which precedes marriage is fairly very often permanent.

Chairman: I do not deny that, but if you take the average—we will not enter into a discussion on that.

You think the censorship should not be too strict?

A. Yes.

Q. Some people advocate too strict censorship. In fact there has been one responsible officer in this city who told us that 80 per cent. of the stuff should be struck off.

A. No, I don't agree with that view. As a matter of fact if you take away all the love scenes you will take away all the amusement side.

Q. And kill the trade?

Mr. Green: And then the young men may go back to the nautch?

A. There is no chance of the nautch being revived, but at the same time they will become more puritanical in their outlook on life, which is not a desirable thing. It makes a man hard hearted. I am one of those who can lay claim to approaching old age, if not being actually old, and I find that a fairly advanced man feels the need of an early training which should have trained him to some sort of amusement. Book reading and serious thinking for the whole of one's life is not good.

*Chairman:* Some lighter side of life is necessary?

A. There should be some light side.

Q. And it is better if it begins early, so that they may understand?

A. Yes, and I personally am of opinion that we in our system of education neglect the aesthetic side of human nature altogether. In the earlier days there was poetry for instance. Nothing has taken the place of that poetry now.

Q. Nothing to equal Kalidasa?

A. No, I am talking of the Punjab. In the Punjab, for instance, Punjabi youths were fond of Urdu poetry, but then Urdu is losing ground and there is nothing in place of it. In order to appreciate English poetry you must have a very good knowledge of the language, which our young men lack, and Hindi not being in vogue is not so much in fashion. I do not think that the young men coming out of the colleges are really good Hindi scholars, so they are out of touch with all sorts of aesthetic life.

Q. And you think therefore that it will be a serious interference with the conditions if you interfere with the films?

A. Yes, I would not interfere too much.

Q. What is your opinion about classifying certain films as "for adults only"; I mean, prohibiting children from going to those things—children below a certain age, say below 14?

A. No, I don't think children below 14 are impressionable in that direction from which you want to wean them.

Q. There is no object in that?

A. No.

Q. If at all, the people who should be prohibited are the people between 14 and 20; that is the period when they become precocious.

A. Yes. As a matter of fact the practice in old times, when I was a boy of 14 or 15, was to prevent boys of that age from reciting love poetry or even love stories.

Q. So you would not advocate a system like that?

A. No, I wouldn't.

Q. You think then that censorship is more or less adequate as it is now?

A. Yes. I have not much experience of censorship. I have just been appointed a member of the Board of Censors, and so far I have given my vote only against two films. I don't know whether the Board will agree to it, but I don't think the censorship ought to be too strict.

Q. You think it is adequate so far?

A. Quite adequate.

Q. I mean the evil has not attained such magnitude as to call for any drastic action.

A. No.

*Colonel Crawford:* I would like to press you a little bit further on your statement that you thought films did have some demoralising effect. Are you satisfied altogether with the stories of the Western films as they are to-day, with the subject matter of the films?

A. No I am not satisfied with the subject matter.

Q. You think, if we can find it practicable, that is a point we might look into?

A. Yes.

Q. Because a film must always be of entertainment value?

A. You should not take away its entertainment value. At the same time you need not depict. . . .

Q. You need not lay too much emphasis on the bad side?

A. Yes.

*Mr. Green:* I have only one question to ask. I take it that your position is that the educative and recreative effects of films counterbalance any demoralising effects they may have?

*A.* Yes; there is room for improvement.

*Q.* Subject also to that proviso?

*A.* Yes.

*Mr. Neogy:* Raja Sahib, what was the trouble about the co-operative film to which you refer?

*A.* I saw it exhibited last Sunday. It brings into prominence the class conflict which prevails in the Punjab and it is peculiar to the Punjab alone which few people outside the Punjab will understand unless they know the whole history of the events which have led up to this conflict. It depicts the creditor as a shrewd man of business who wants to get full advantage of his being in a position to supply money and he takes an improper advantage of the needs of the borrower who is a zamindar; and the warp and woof, the underlying basis of this conflict is communal too, because most of the creditors are Hindus and most of the borrowers Muhammadans. So it accentuates not only that class conflict which prevails between the rural and the urban classes, in which most Muhammadans join the Muhammadan side and a few of the Hindus join on the Hindu side, it not only accentuates that hostility but it also accentuates and aggravates the communal aspect of the question. That is why I objected to it. I don't know whether the Board will accept my view; but I have sent it in. There was another film which exhibited the worst scenes of rowdiness in connection with the French Revolution.

*Q.* That was a foreign film?

*A.* Yes it was a foreign film, "Orphans of the Storm". I objected to that also, because, although the wiser minds would take a good lesson from it—there are many good lessons to be taken from it,—on the crowd the effect would not be good. The effect would be that mob rule can achieve much if rowdiness is successful in combatting the tyranny of a class. That idea I did not want suggested to the people, because, after all, it is not a good idea. Now we are advanced enough in our political views to be able to achieve without rowdiness and revolution the changes and reforms that we need. The whole idea of constitutional agitation is based upon that. If you bring to the notice of the authorities what your complaints and grievances are by simply knocking at their door frequently, you get your grievances redressed without having recourse to revolution or rowdiness.

*Chairman:* You are very optimistic that way.

*A.* I am, because I do not think that force is necessary in every case. That is the teaching of history and I have two very prominent instances in mind.

*Q.* I hope your views are well founded.

*Mr. Neogy:* So far as that co-operative film was concerned, is this your view, that although that film might be exhibited without any injurious effect in other provinces, having regard to the special circumstances of the Punjab, it would have an injurious effect here? That is your view?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Now on the question of Imperial preference, perhaps you are aware that this question was referred to by the Fiscal Commission which was appointed in the year 1921-22 by the Government of India and the Commission unanimously came to the conclusion that any policy of Imperial preference should not be put into operation until and unless the legislature accepted it. The Government of India thereupon practically decided not to bring in any measure to give effect to Imperial preference before having the matter debated in the Legislature. Now, is this your view, that although the general question of policy underlying Imperial preference has not been so discussed, yet for the purpose of the film industry an exception should be made, or that we should wait till the whole principle is discussed

A. I would not wait. I do not see that the question of Imperial preference comes in very largely into this matter.

Q. You are thinking more of the propaganda aspect?

A. Yes. It is not a question of Imperial preference. Simply because the bugbear of Imperial preference comes in, I don't think we should give up other good things that come in the wake of it. After all Imperial preference is not so bad in itself as to drive out all other considerations.

Q. The particular aspect of the film industry that appeals to you most is that it is a very powerful engine of propaganda and for that purpose it is necessary that India and the other parts of the Empire should know each other better through this agency?

A. Yes, quite right.

Q. And that, I think, can be brought about the co-operation of the Governments of different parts of the Empire. If the Governments were to undertake a sort of an exchange of films produced in their respective parts of the Empire for exhibition—that would be the most effective way of doing it?

A. I am not able to give an opinion as to whether the one way is better than the other. After all Government agency is not so automatic in its operation as the agency of the trade.

Q. But that presupposes that Indian films will be acceptable to other parts of the British Empire. Having regard to the present poor quality of Indian films, is there any guarantee that the films that any trader will send out from here will find a market in other parts of the Empire?

A. I cannot say. All that I can say is that the good which can be achieved by this means is what was achieved by the South African Deputation that came here last winter. I do not know what erroneous notions they had about Indian life. Probably they thought all Indians were, as the Chairman has remarked, coolies; but when they came here they had opportunities of seeing things for themselves and they came to know that we are as much human beings as they are.

Q. You contemplate the condition in which South Africans will have an opportunity of seeing films of this country and its people?

A. Yes.

Q. That presupposes that the film will be acceptable to the South Africans from the point of view of quality. May I read out to you a statement made by a European police officer. He says "Theoretically the proposition is admirable but I cannot see how it can be given practical form except on the basis of an equal exchange of films. Indian films are as yet neither numerous nor, to Western eyes, attractive enough to excite much demand outside India. Any policy of exchange whereby British interests would profit to a greater degree than India will be regarded by Indian politicians and by the Indian public—and perhaps with justice—as exploitation".

A. If you can find a better way of introducing that aim without introducing into it any controversial matter, I quite agree that it would be better.

Q. So you are anxious to have a sort of propaganda carried on with the help of films? You are not so keen on Imperial preference as such?

A. No, No.

*Colonel Crawford:* Arising out of one very interesting question that Mr. Neogy asked about the co-operative picture, you pointed out that communal differences were a distinct difficulty in the way of Indian pictures; I mean, where different sections of the community were brought out in an unfavourable light. To what extent should we pay attention to particular communal differences?

A. I think to a great extent.

Q. We must admit it is a difficulty we cannot get over at present.

A. There are scenes which are free from all objection. I could point out  
For instance, there are scenes in Akbar's life or Jehangir's life;

Akbar seated with his Darbar which comprised both Hindu and Muhammadan officials. Any incident from Akbar's or Jehangir's life would be attractive to both Hindus and Muhammadans. Then there are scenes from the Ramayana and the Mahabharata which would attract largely Hindu audiences but they would not be in any way annoying or displeasing to Muhammadans.

Q. Supposing for instance you wanted to build up a story having a moral effect, and you show a young man in life getting into difficulties because he goes to a money-lender—well, at the moment money-lenders mainly belong to one section of the community, would you have to cut that out?

A. In provinces other than the Punjab I would not object to it. For instance in the Bombay presidency, in the United Provinces, I would not object because there the borrower and the money-lender are both Hindus.

Mr. Neogy: Has this conflict between the borrower and the money-lender assumed a communal aspect here?

A. It has in the Punjab.

Colonel Crawford: And that makes it necessary for us to be careful. I only bring up the point as showing one difficulty in the way of developing our Indian pictures.

A. Yes, but apart from that you can have stories which would be free from that sort of objection. You can have incidents from the history of India which would not labour under the same difficulty.

Q. But that does circumscribe to a certain extent the scope of the scenario writer and the story writer.

### **Written Statement of Mr. S. D. PURI, Proprietor, Gaiety Theatre, dated the 24th November 1927.**

#### **INTRODUCTORY.**

1. Yes, I am a member of the firm of Messrs. M. D. Puri and Sons of Lahore who were the first to start cinema exhibition in the Punjab. We do renting of films as well. Two wrestling matches were made under my direction and then they were hired out in the Punjab. The experience was quite a novel one as it was quite different from what is done outside India. We are in this business since 1912. I have also studied nearly every place of the Industry.

#### **GENERAL.**

2. (1) Indians of the educated class frequent cinemas in large numbers.

(2) The illiterate class is only half of the educated class. The attendance of both the classes is insignificantly on the increase. This refers to the Punjab of which I have practical experience of 15 years.

(b) Even cinemas in the European quarters have a large number of Indian audience while those in the Indian quarters compose of purely of Indian audience.

(c) The percentage of children is about 4 per cent. in the European quarters and 10 per cent. in the Indian quarters, while adolescents of impressionable age represent about a third of the audience in the European quarter and little more in the Indian quarters.

#### **PART I.**

##### *Film Industry in India.*

3. Indian subjects produced in India or abroad, fighting serials and wild west dramas with plenty of action, are most popular with an Indian audience. Big speculator dramas are also liked very much by the Indians.

4. No, the exhibitors are not able to do what ought to be done on account of the numerous difficulties in their way. For want of Indian subjects they



are too few to meet the demand. It is very hard to cope with the demand of every Province as every one has its own language, customs, legends and ideals (Bombay is the only province which is supporting its own cinema production and no other province can boast of even half a dozen films of equal merit).

5. Indian films depicting Indian life are not readily available (except for Bombay) as there is not a single producing company who has half a dozen films that would be appreciated in the whole of India.

(a) Considering the age of the film industry in India, Bombay has done very well with its limited means and the little financial support it has had. But still they are far behind the Western films which are miles ahead. Film produced in Bombay are improving in every detail day by day taking into consideration that they have not up-to-date lighting arrangements and have to fall back upon natural light.

(b) They are popular with Indian audiences and not with the European audiences. Hindu mythological films are popular with Hindus only. There have been only a couple of films which have been popular with both the Hindus and the Mohammadans. Social and detective, adventure of mixed plot would be popular with both the communities.

(c) Certainly it is more profitable to show an Indian produced film to a purely Indian audience, but Europeans and educated Indians to some extent prefer foreign made films because of the poor quality of the latter. The few successful Indian films are "The Light of Asia" (produced in India by Indians and then sent to Germany for developing and printing) "Ramayan", "Mahabharatha", "Krishna Jamma", "Leila Majnu", "Shirin Farhad", "Nalladaanyanti", "Dhruv Charita", "Gulbakalvi", and few others.

6. (a) Yes.

(b) Mythological films would appeal most strongly to the educated and the illiterate classes of the Indians in general.

(1) Indian historical and social subjects have a great appeal to the educated Indians.

(2) Legends, kisses, adventure, detective and fast action (also subjects with a religious tinge) would go a very long way with the illiterate class.

7. There is no difficulty in obtaining films for British troops. Indian troops are too lowly paid to afford to see and pay for the cinema tickets, otherwise the same pictures that appeal to the illiterate Indian will be good enough for them.

8. (a) No one of these branches of the industry is satisfactorily working. The policy of live and let live and co-operation is entirely lacking.

(b) *Production*.—The difficulty is felt to a great extent for lack of help from the Government, Military, Indian States, and private bodies to facilitate the production in staging and taking exteriors such as use of the oriental places, troops, railway trains, steamers, aeroplanes, etc., etc. India is a country for wonderful old buildings and the best scenery of the world and the inexhaustive literature for plots. But there is not a single studio which has up-to-date modern lighting arrangements (as every thing is done by day-light). The initial cost is so much that no private enterprise ventures to help the industry.

*Distribution*.—The distribution in India is only to the benefit of the distributor and there is very little for scope for the independent exhibitor. There are only three large distributors in India.

(1) *Messrs. Madan Theatres Limited*.—They practically get the cream of the world's production by paying prohibitive royalty on the film rights. They have a chain of over sixty theatres and some more are associated with them. They outbid others as they are sure of about 100 theatres run, which are in every town of importance. If an independent distributor ventures to buy a big film the circuit of 100 theatres of Messrs. Madan Theatres Limited is closed for them. And he is lucky if he even makes as much as he has spent.

(2) *Messrs. Universal Pictures Corporation.*—They have four offices in India including the head office in Bombay. This company only handles its own productions made in America and turns out one or two at the most big films in the year, the rest are second class and third class. This concern has only to pay the customs duty (the cost of copies is quite insignificant and the staff). They do the best business out of the lot. Exhibitors taking their supply from them have to take all kinds of films.

(3) *Messrs. Pathé—India.*—For a long time they had only one office in Bombay; only in this year they have opened branches in few places. As they have to pay for the films and duty they buy the second class films from few producers and the whole turnout of Messrs. Pathé, France and America. The rest of the distributors buy whatever is left by the above companies and that is not much good to the exhibitor.

*Exhibition.*—The exhibitor being the backbone of the industry, is the only one to suffer at the hands of every one. It is nothing but the miserable monotony of the industry for him. Every person of little concern of Government, Railway, Police, Municipality, Electric Supply Company, any one and every one who can put a spoke in the running wheel of the showman jumps at the throat of the showman to extort free tickets and get them not only for himself but for his friends and relatives (with the result every show of the cinema is full of about 25 per cent. free ticket holders). There can be no stop to this unhealthy practice as it would be fatal to the showman. Government or any other body cannot uproot it. (If I appear in the witness box and am asked to explain I will do it). Now after paying for the Theatre rent, prohibitive film hire, staff, advertising, electric current (The electric companies show no concession in this part of the country for the huge amount of current used by the cinema as is done in Bombay) and other expenses, the showman is in a hopeless state of affairs. It is always a question of how to make two ends meet for the showman and if he saves at all it is only his bread and butter. As a matter of fact the showman sweats for the benefit of the producer and the distributor. Most of the cinemas are working because the exhibitor has gone so deep in it that he cannot leave it.

9. As above stated, it is difficult to get good films on reasonable hire for the independent exhibitor. The public is not in the least concerned with it as every town of importance has a cinema, either of Messrs. Madan Theatres or associated with it, and the public does not feel the pinch. Most of the Exhibitors are owners of the theatres or have taken them on long lease otherwise many would have closed down long since. The question of bread and butter makes them limp on. Messrs. Madan Theatres Limited buying the best films of the world's market is as good as a monopoly. They corner the best films and reap the harvest.

10. Every independent showman has to do block and blind booking. First run or key theatres exist in India and over 80 per cent. are owned by Messrs. Madan Theatres Limited.

11. No. None at all except Bombay and Calcutta and in these places the majority of the cinemas are of Madan Theatres Limited.

12. The public will hesitate to go to cinemas if there is any entertainment tax. One rupee is just one rupee and one rupee and two annas is like two rupees gone out of one pocket. There is no justification for the entertainment tax when the tax has been taken off theatres. The only innocent amusement is the cinema while races, dances and others shows are more expensive for the average person in India where people have cinema shows for four annas. The tax would be a great drain to the average takings of the cinemas.

13. The custom tariff does not effect the showman much. If cut down it will only swell the pockets of the renter who will not give any rebate to the showman. To promote the industry customs duty should be cut down to a nominal figure for the raw films (unexposed negatives and positives) and machinery of all its branches. This will mean a great encouragement to the coming enterprisers and specially to the new men.

14. Yes, it would help the industry to a great extent in the long run. Having first had knowledge in this line my opinion is that it should be done as soon as possible. Lately there has been a good demand of such films from the Punjab Government and some Indian States but these are not available in the market.

15. The conditions are favourable in this country for film production, that is cheap labour, good light, the world's best scenery, and natural settings; the only drawbacks are the modern lighting outfit, Government's co-operation and finance.

16. No, here we are lacking to a great extent. The cinema industry is bound to develop in India and will advance by leaps and bounds as soon as some financiers turn their mind towards it. For this purpose schools should be opened to teach every phase of the industry such as there are in other countries of the West. Government has been neglectful in not sending even a single person out of the industry on scholarship for training in this line. Every Provincial Government should give land on long lease and financial help for the production of the films.

17. Not for a long time, because the biggest Indian concern has not given any encouraging report so far.

18. The Provincial Government schools should have an up-to-date studio, laboratory and competent staff which should teach this art to students and these should also be let out to the producing companies as they cannot afford what is most essential for the better pictures.

19. The cost of the film production is as little in India as the quality is poor in comparison with the western films.

20. Yes, it would mean heavy expenses to start with but then there will be an income from the fees of the students and from the hire of the studio and the staff. Certainly it is justifiable as there will be a lot of labour employed.

21. The Government should do all in its power to have propaganda films in connection with their own departments, Education, Agriculture, Sanitation, etc. I am of opinion that it is most undesirable to control the entertainment of the public when it is open to everybody to take part in it. As far as the Government is concerned, the existing safeguard is quite sufficient. Of course it would mean a lot if a law is passed to show one reel of instructive film in every programme which should be supplied to the showman free by the Government.

#### *Films of the British Commonwealth.*

22. (a) It is not safe and healthy to force the public to pay and see what they do not care to see. Either there should be a home love and love of its industry like the Germans have or the goods should be of equal merit and at the same price. British films are not of the same standard as the American ones and they are more expensive. When people do not patronise, from a national point of view, Indian made films it will not be possible to show British films. The educated Indians hesitate to spend money on the Indian films as they are crude and it will not be safe to use force and legislation with respect to this. As soon as the British films are of equal quality, the public will force the exhibitor to show those to them. Nowadays it is not the pleasure of the exhibitor but of the public.

(b) It will be against the interests of the Indian film industry. As Indian productions are of poor quality there is no chance of reciprocity.

(c) No.

23. (a) To a great extent. It will promote understanding between each other.

(b) By interchange of locally made films of new handicrafts, industrial institutions, etc. Every Government should either give contracts to a firm or employ its own men and have the films made.

## PART 2.

*Social aspect and control.*

24. (a) No.

(b) No.

(c) Immoral films depicting the nude should not be allowed.

(d) (1) Yes.

(2) Yes.

(c) No, I certainly challenge this. As it is the product of the dead hearts and the old ladies who must say something to gossip about. I do admit that there have been few bad films but they did not come into the market; the censor took care of that. These people go so far that only the other day they said that war films should not be shown to the children as they create a war spirit. Well, that is a limit! We certainly want our children to know all about the war as they are the coming generation. The verdict of Judge Ben Lindsey who has presided for 27 years in the juvenile court at Denver is that the movies has no effect of crime on the children. The little complaint there was that the criminals have taken to motor car robberies, the tend of the criminal is stronger than the average man and if the movies had not come in he would have done it, taking the advantage of the speed. Even the cinema learnt this from non-cinema people. It would be just as well to stop the import of the Autocars as to cry over and blame the cinema.

(f) This does not arise.

25. To a certain extent, but the present censorship covers it.

26. (a) Care should be taken.

(b) I know of only one instance, "Nur Jehan".

27. (a) No, I do not think it has a tendency to lower Western ideals before Eastern eyes. The educated class is too intelligent to form this idea and the masses are only interested with the plot and the fast action of the film.

(b) I know that films shown in India must also be exhibited abroad. I strongly object to films being produced when they have only one object, to misrepresent Eastern. If a Westerner wants to ridicule, there is a man shown in Eastern costume called a Raja or Nawab and such impossibilities are shown that we do not imagine them in whole of our life. Treachery, mischief, blackheart and everything bad is represented in the pictures by Indians and utter impossibilities. Our customs and manners are also misrepresented. The verification of this can be seen from the following films:—

Sailor Made Man, Master Key, The Palace of the Darkened Windows, Bride 13, Round the World in 18 Days,

and there are many others which misrepresent us. The Government and the censor has been absolutely neglectful towards this point.

28. (a) and (b). No such films are allowed to be shown.

29. No, it will only help the showman to cheat the public. As my experience is from woman to woman when people see this note that children under such and such age have been stopped to see this film they flock to the cinema hoping to see something extraordinary.

30. No, this will add another worry to the exhibitor, to argue at the time of the show with every boy and his guardian about the age of the child, and no good will come out of this law.

31. Yes.

32. Yes, provided the censors are broadminded. I suggest that a law should be framed to ban all the productions of the company who produces even one film in which Indians are either ridiculed or misrepresented.

33. (a) Unreasonably strict censorship would undoubtedly interfere with the recreation of the people.

(b) It will certainly begin with dropping the audience at the cinemas and in the end the drop will be very high and harmful to the industry.

(c) Yes.

34. (a) Yes.

(1) As most of the distribution companies are in Bombay and Calcutta they have their business running there. They also have relations and influence there. The films are passed by the censors, shown in those cities. They go to another province. The showman pays the hire, advertises and booms the film. The show starts or is about to start. He gets an order to stop the film. Of the order comes the next day. And the showman cannot get back the rent paid on that film.

(2) It will help the real man who suffers the most.

(3) The board should be constituted of all classes of people, officials and non-officials, and from every community.

(4) Delhi, it being quite central to all India and the seat of the Government of India.

(b) No, there should be only one competent board and then the Deputy Commissioner is always supreme in his district to see and ban a film if considered necessary.

(c) Now this does not arise.

(d) As at present by censorship fees on films examined.

35. (a) An experienced broad minded censor, whole time, well paid, with an advisory board will be the best.

(b) In the Punjab they are dead hearts and not broad minded.

36. (a) Already replied to in 34 (a) (1).

(b) This does not arise.

37. (a) Yes.

(b) No.

38. There have been some instances. "The Ten Commandments", "Orphans of the Storm", "Turki Hoor", "Vir Durgadas" and others.

39. I have no knowledge.

40. No, this will lead to another branch of free tickets. Will do no good as the Press Act is quite clear.

41. Yes, and a good bit in Indian productions.

42. Yes, I suggest their inclusion in the advisory board or the censor boards as the case may be.

43. (a) No let of facilities in the reduction of duty and handle should be given to the person of the company importing educational films.

(b) To encourage education by films which have all along proved so successful in every propaganda work. So much so that at the time of Great War recruiting was done with the help of the films, which proved very successful. Researches are also being filmed and there are many other things which Indian students here will never see that they can film and give first hand knowledge. The duty on the machinery should also be reduced to help the new work and other enterprisers of the industry. The cinema having such forceful strength, advantage should be taken of its good quality and the country uplifted. The cinema with its universal language will very soon accomplish what will take years to do.

(c) 43 (a) covers this question.

44. The public is the only body that keeps the film standard. The majority of the press does not write (until forced) against the cinema or the films for fear of losing the packet of free tickets.

45. No, the censor is there and does it when it is necessary.

46. Not necessarily.

**Written Statement of the Manager, Star Cinema, Lahore, dated the  
24th November 1927.**

1. No.
2. (c) Only 10 per cent.
3. Dramatic and social films.
4. The exhibitors are catering for Indian audience specially.
5. (a) Yes.
- (b) Yes.
- (c) Both are profitable. "Passion" of Sharda Film Company, Bombay.
6. (b) (1) Social and Mythology.
- (2) Dramatic and thrilling Western serials.
8. (b) To correct their Urdu titles.
11. We have sufficient facility.
- Not at present.
15. Provided they supply films cheaper than Western Companies.
24. (b) 'Sati Sirdarva.'
- (c) No such crime is known as yet in this Province.
26. (a) These films must be censored at once.
- (b) We don't know the whereabouts of these films.
28. (a) No.
- (b) No.
31. (a) Yes.
32. There must be one Censor throughout India.
36. (a) We like the Bombay and the Calcutta systems, and the censor must be a highly qualified man.
37. (b) No.
38. "Orphans of the Storm."
40. These are not necessary. No.
44. By advertising and Press reviews.
45. (b) These must be registered and properly licensed.

**Oral Evidence of Mr. S. D. PURI, Proprietor of the Gaiety Theatre,  
and Mr. RAM PERSHAD MARWA, Proprietor of the Star  
Theatre (who was accompanied by the Manager of the Star  
Theatre), on Saturday, the 26th November 1927.**

*Chairman:* Mr. Puri, how long have you had the Gaiety?

A. Since 1917.

Q. And Mr. Pershad has had the Star Cinema for how long?

Mr. Puri: 1 year.

Q. Only one year? Did you build it yourself or did you rent it?

Mr. Pershad: I rented it.

Q. Who built it?

A. Dadabhai, a Parsi.

Mr. Puri: I think I can tell you the history. The Star Cinema was started in 1920. It was built by one Mr. Tody, the proprietor of a theatrical company. It was in conjunction with Mr. Pellier of Quetta. He was running the Empire Cinema here. Mr. Pellier was running it for a long time, then Madans took it over when they took over Pellier's concerns. Then Madans closed it down in 1926 and after a few months this gentleman took over the place.

**Q. How many theatres have Madans here?**

**A.** They have two cinemas now in Lahore. They had 4 before.

**Q.** They closed down two?

**A.** One they converted into a dance hall, the Empire Theatre; and the other one they closed down. It used to be called the Empress.

**Q.** Why did they close it down?

**A.** I was competing with them at the Gaiety Theatre. My cinema is in the city.

**Q.** And this gentleman, Mr. Pershad, has taken it over?

**A.** He took it over after a few months.

**Q.** Is he succeeding?

**A.** He is doing very well.

**Q.** But what pictures are you showing?

**Mr. Pershad:** Mixed; Indian and Western films.

**Q.** You have had the Theatre one year now.

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** How many Indian pictures have you shown?

**A.** I show two pictures a month.

**Q.** Where do you get your Indian films?

**The Manager:** From Bombay, the Sharda Company, the Kohinoor Company, the Krishna Company.

**Q.** Are they popular here?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Do people crowd to both Indian shows?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** You get better audiences for Indian shows than for Western shows?

**A.** They are about equal.

**Q.** How many nights do you run Indian pictures.

**A.** Four nights or three nights.

**Mr. Neogy:** Two shows every day?

**A.** Yes.

**Chairman:** Western pictures similarly?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** How much do you get on an average from your box office collection on a week day? If you are afraid of the income-tax people you need not answer. You might give us a statement confidentially. Have you any objection to giving us a confidential statement on condition that we will not give you up to the income-tax people?

**A.** Very well, Sir.

**Q.** But Madans found it a failure in that quarter whereas these people are succeeding: how do you explain that?

**Mr. Puri:** I explained the same thing to Mr. J. J. Madan of Calcutta when he was down here before closing their place. I told him one General Manager had to look after 4 theatres and the Manager could not take as much interest in a concern as a proprietor can.

**Q.** Within how many months did the other people start?

**The Manager:** We started after 9 months.

**Q.** And it is proving a success in your hands?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Is it because he only exhibits his own pictures in the other two theatres and does not take on any other pictures?

**Mr. Puri:** Once in a blue moon he does.

*Q.* So that the public of Lahore become familiar with his pictures shown in the other two theatres, and this theatre could not be successful. But you are able to exhibit other films. You take your Western films from whom?

*The Manager:* These days we are taking them from Madans. At first we were taking them from the Universal Film Company in Lahore.

*Q.* After he has shown them in his two theatres?

*A.* We are taking 2nd run or 3rd run films.

*Q.* That is what I mean. You take the pictures from Madan after he has exhibited them in his own theatres?

*A.* Yes, Sir, after an interval of 6 months or a year.

*Q.* But still they are old ones. You are content to show old ones?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Why did you give up the Universal or other agency from whom you were buying before?

*A.* These pictures are more popular?

*Q.* Do you get them on better terms?

*A.* They are both cheaper and more popular—Madan's films.

*Q.* What does Madan charge you on an average? Does he sell or hire.

*Mr. Puri:* We all hire.

*Q.* How much does he charge you?

*A.* It depends on the quality of the film.

*Q.* Is it a percentage?

*A.* No, Sir; it is a fixed hire depending on the quality of the film.

*Q.* You settle it for each film?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* And you, Mr. Puri, you also take them for your theatre?

*A.* Sometimes we do take them from Madan's.

*Q.* And you also hire from other people like the Universal and Pathé?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* You also run Indian pictures?

*A.* Yes, I do. Twice a month.

*Q.* What is your experience, does the Indian public take to Indian pictures? Are they becoming popular in Lahore?

*A.* They are becoming popular but only a particular class of film.

*Q.* Mythology?

*A.* Mythology would go only with Hindus; and if it is a Muhammadan play it would go only with Muhammadans. There are only one or two films that will go with both audiences.

*Q.* What are they? Social films?

*A.* Yes, social films. There was one picture I screened some time ago—"Kala Nag"; it was not successful to me as regards the box-office receipts but from the educated audience point of view it was successful.

*Q.* Was it a social drama?

*A.* Yes, a social drama. It was produced by the Kohinoor Film Company of Bombay.

*Q.* Do Madans show any Indian pictures at all here in their theatres?

*A.* They used to show Indian pictures in their Bhati Gate theatre. They showed a couple of films last year, one of them is known as "Turki Hoor", and that was a huge success. There was also another Indian film which they showed and which went well in the Excelsior theatre. Then that film was passed on to the Empire cinema. It was produced in Italy under the direction of Mr. J. J. Madan and his wife. The name of the film is "Savitri". It was very popular here amongst the Hindus. Most of the educated people know the whole story because it was a text taught in every school here some years ago.



**Q.** Do you find any difficulty in getting their films?

**A.** Yes, we have great difficulty.

**Q.** What is the difficulty?

**A.** Our audiences generally like either Indian subjects or serials or wild west dramas with plenty of action.

**Q.** Do the audience care much for passionate love scenes where there is long kissing, embracing and so on?

**A.** Not much.

**Q.** When you exhibit Indian films, do the educated Indians come there in such large numbers as when you exhibit western films?

**A.** There is a slight falling off in the number of educated Indians when we show Indian pictures.

**Q.** What class of people have you in mind when you speak of the educated people? Do you mean people who live in English style?

**A.** Yes, people who live in English style don't come to see Indian pictures, also those who adopt English manners don't care to see Indian pictures.

**Q.** In what class of films was there a slight falling off?

**A.** If we put up a mythological play, all educated people come to see it, but if it is a social drama, they don't care to come. In the case of the mythological play they merely come for the religious aspect of it.

**Q.** Now, social dramas apparently depict their anglicised life, so far as I have seen such pictures, and they show the weakness of the anglicised Indian's life?

**A.** Yes, these social dramas are generally against anglicised Indians.

**Q.** It is more or less a caricature of the anglicised India?

**A.** Yes, but these social dramas are slightly exaggerated. That is one of the reasons why they don't like these social dramas; and they also do not like to be ridiculed. It is this class of social dramas that the anglicised Indian does not care to see.

**Q.** Do you think that the educated Indian does not go to see these films because the technique is not good?

**A.** Of course, the technique is very poor, and he does complain a lot about it.

**Mr. Neogy:** You mean they may be prepared to put up with poor technique in the case of mythological films, because the subjects treated there have a particular attraction for them, but not in the case of the social dramas?

**A.** There is another aspect which I forgot to mention in my Report, and that is, the sub-titles of the Indian pictures are too suggestive, to which I personally object. When they put up a sub-title, it is too suggestive, it is too blunt.

**Chairman:** Let me have an instance.

**A.** I was seeing a picture at the Universal Picture House called the "Shire Fazur", and in one of the sub-titles it was written "Youth, Beauty and Love at your disposal"; and a girl is saying this to a man. It is certainly rather too blunt in a garden scene. I wonder how the censors passed such a sub-title.

**Colonel Crawford:** In what language is that sub-title?

**A.** It was in four languages. As a matter of fact, I have been questioned by many European ladies and gentlemen about these sub-titles, and they have also complained to me about such sub-titles.

**Mr. Neogy:** Do they go to see the Indian pictures?

**A.** Sometimes.

**Chairman:** You say that some Europeans and Anglo-Indians do go to see Indian pictures?

**A.** Yes, some of them do go.

**Q.** Is there any falling off in the number of Anglo-Indians and Europeans when you exhibit Indian pictures?

**A.** I do not know whether the manager of the Universal Picture House would like to hear it, but there were some European ladies and gentlemen present in his theatre, and they were asked to come and see an Indian picture even without paying anything, but they did not care to come in at all. They came to see the cinema, but when they learnt that it was an Indian show, they did not care for it. They did not care to see it, though they were given the option of a free look at the picture.

**Q.** Do you think it is a prejudice?

**A.** I have got no idea of what it is. I remember having shown two pictures in Kashmir this year. One was "The Light of Asia" and another was "A Thousand and One Nights". I showed both these pictures there and there was a packed house every time. The audience included all the Europeans in the station, and they all appreciated both the dramas. I showed these films twice in the European club, and everybody appreciated both the films. "The Light of Asia" was produced in India with western assistance, but it was printed and developed in Germany.

**Q.** I suppose your theatres are in the Indian quarters?

**A.** Yes, in Lahore my theatre is in the Indian quarters, and in Kashmir it is in the civil station.

**Q.** There is very little European population there, is there not?

**A.** My chief clients are Europeans. I have been running cinemas for the last 12 or 13 years in Lahore. I have got about 15 years experience in the line. I have been running cinemas in Indian States and military stations.

**Q.** Now, I suppose the so-called illiterate classes like action scenes?

**A.** Yes, they also like a lot of fighting.

**Q.** Have any of you thought of producing films yourself?

**A.** Yes, sir. I had this idea in mind for years and years, and before the failure of the Alliance Bank of India I was going to float a concern myself. Here is a prospectus of the concern that I proposed to float in those days (A copy of the prospectus was handed in by the witness to the Committee). I had everything ready, but owing to the failure of the Alliance Bank I had to abandon the idea altogether.

**Q.** Do you find great difficulty in getting films?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** What is your difficulty? Do you mean there are not sufficient distributing agencies?

**A.** There are sufficient distributing agencies, but the difficulty comes in with regard to hire. We have to pay large sums for hire.

**Q.** But we are told that you can get the American films very cheap if you buy them direct? What is the largest amount you have to pay?

**A.** For a film like "The Thief of Bagdad", our friends lately paid about Rs. 1,800 for a week's run.

**Q.** How much did they make out of it?

**A.** They got about Rs. 500 profit for a week's run.

**Q.** What is the lowest amount they have paid?

**A.** Rs. 250 for a three days' run.

**Q.** What is your lowest amount, Mr. Puri?

**A.** My lowest has been about Rs. 125, Rs. 130 or Rs. 150, and the highest has been over Rs. 1,000.

**Q.** I suppose you do not complain of a loss?

**A.** We are just buttering our bread, that is all.

**Q.** What is the difficulty? Have you to buy only through a particular agency or what?

**A.** Blind and block booking are very prominent.

**Q.** Are you obliged to take films in a lot?

**A.** No film hiring company will give us one picture if we want one, and if they do agree to hire only one picture, it will be at such a prohibitive rate that we should not be able to make both ends meet. I wanted to hire "The Thief of Bagdad", for the second run, and Madans wanted Rs. 2,500 for it, but if we were prepared to take some other pictures along with it, we would probably have got it for less. No distributor will give us one or two pictures only.

**Q.** How do the distributors get their pictures? Do they get them in blocks?

**A.** If you will kindly refer to page 2 of my statement, I have given full details there.

**Q.** Now, what is your remedy for the difficulty?

**A.** There is no remedy. Madans are adventurous people and they have got a lot of money. I don't grudge them that, there is nothing to prevent them from having the monopoly. There is really nothing much to worry about it. When Mr. J. J. Madan went to America to sell off his company there he evidently gave the Americans a somewhat bombastic idea about India and her people. Since then the United Artists and Paramount and a few other companies have sent out their representatives to tour round this country, and probably a couple of those companies will open their branch offices over here. Then there will be a chance for more pictures to come in. Some of the pictures which Madans are getting from them will be available to the other exhibitors as well when those firms open their branches here. After all, Madans are holding their own pictures and they will never give them to me for first run. I don't think any action is possible in this matter.

*Mr. Pershad:* I agree with that view.

*Chairman:* Mr. Puri, do you know of any exhibitor who has got his own theatre?

**A.** I have got my own theatre.

**Q.** How many cinemas are there in Lahore?

**A.** There are six cinemas in Lahore and one in the Cantonment, altogether there are 7.

**Q.** Do Madans own any theatre here?

**A.** No, sir, but they have leased some from the other proprietors.

**Q.** You are the only exhibitor who owns a theatre?

**A.** Yes. As a matter of fact, the land was given to us by Government in the year 1916 for a nominal price of Rs. 10,000. We had to pay another Rs. 8,000 a couple of years ago. The Government gave us the land to build a cinema in that quarter to provide healthy amusement for the city people of Lahore, for practically half the price.

**Q.** It is a very interesting fact. You say the Government gave you the land for building a cinema for half the price?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Now, you would like to have this "block" and "blind" booking abolished?

**A.** If the Government can help the exhibitor in that direction.

**Q.** Does not the system of "block" and "blind" booking prevail in the west? There they have to take from the producer even before he produces the picture. Here you know what you are bargaining for, and you know it consists of A, B or C films?

**A.** In 75 or 80 per cent. of cases we know what they are.

**Q.** They have already been run in the west, and you know the quality and so on from the magazines?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** You are forced to resort to "blind" and "block" booking and do you think that system will gradually disappear if there are more distributing agencies of good quality films?

A. I don't think there will be more distributing agencies as far as India is concerned for a long time to come. If any English or American were to set up an office in competition with Madans, there is no likelihood of another Madan coming up, because Madans themselves have not shown very promising results during the last few years.

Q. And yet they are spreading their nets?

A. They are overdoing it.

Q. I suppose you have no entertainment tax here?

A. No, nor am I in favour of it.

Q. I suppose you are in favour of encouraging the Indian industry?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you think that customs duty should be enhanced on films?

A. Customs duty curtailed on the entertainment films will do no good to the exhibitor. We won't get any rebate from the distributor. It can remain just as it is on the entertainment films.

Q. Do you think there is a chance for the Indian industry to grow if you allow western films to come in as freely as they do?

A. I have suggested that the duty to be levied on machinery and raw material should only be nominal.

Q. Do you also advocate the quota system? Being an exhibitor yourself, I should like to have your opinion?

A. I am not in favour of it, but I don't mind if there is compulsion to show instructional films.

Q. You say that you are against the quota system, but you know that the English people are submitting to it. So I ask you if, as an exhibitor, you would be prepared to agree to the quota system?

A. I don't think so.

Q. Then you are not patriotic?

A. It is a question of bread and butter, and if legislation is going to take away that bread and butter, I should not be able to do anything at all. First of all I have to think of myself and then of my country.

Q. The British Exhibitor has consented to it?

A. But look at the quality of their pictures.

Q. Do you think the quality of the English pictures is much better than the Indian?

A. Yes.

Q. Have you exhibited any social drama pictures?

A. I think I did show one a couple of years ago, I don't remember exactly what it was.

Q. Are there any British social drama pictures anywhere here?

A. I am afraid not, but I will let you know if you like.

Q. I should like to see some English social drama, because I don't remember having seen any. I want to see whether it differs really from the American pictures.

A. British social drama pictures are very few and they don't come in at all. I showed only one British picture in the whole of my experience, and that was "Woman to Woman", starring Betty Compson—she has now gone back to America. In that picture there was a clause that it was banned for children under 14. I am not in favour of such a clause, because when we say it is banned for children, it is the best advertisement that we can get. I don't think on the whole it is a wholesome proposition to do it. It was a British film and passed by the Bombay Board of Censors. It was taken round by Mr. Slade who opened the Slade Cinema. The British films, I may say, are more expensive than the American ones.

Q. Can you give us an idea how much more expensive they are?

A. We have to pay about one third more, but the majority of them are not of the same quality.

Q. Supposing they improved their technique as they are making an effort to do now. You mean, unless they can be available at least at the same rate at which you are getting American films it won't pay you to buy British films if they are of the same price and quality?

A. We will certainly prefer English films, because after all we owe more to the British than to the Americans.

Q. Are you prepared to buy them at a higher price and of a lower quality?

A. No, after all, my bread and butter is there.

Q. So that you will insist upon price and quality, if preference is to be given to British films?

A. Of course.

Q. You are not patriotic enough to sacrifice your bread and butter?

A. No.

Q. Much less so for the Empire?

A. Yes. If I am going to starve I shall not be able to do much for the country.

Q. Is that view shared by your friends here? Will he not take the quota system?

A. What will be the quota?

Q. It will be a gradual rising beginning with a small percentage, say with a reel of about 500 feet?

A. I shall have no objection to that. If we are safeguarded against prohibitive prices, I don't think we can object to it. Personally, I should have no objection to it.

*Colonel Crawford:* I was very much interested in your evidence. I gather that you said that, so far as Lahore is concerned, Indian films and western films are of about equal popularity to an Indian audience.

A. Provided the western films are either fighting serials, wild west dramas with plenty of action or very high class comics.

Q. Not social dramas.

A. Not social dramas. So far as an Indian audience is concerned, if we were to change serial drama to social drama, there would be an immediate drop of 95 per cent. in the attendance.

Q. Therefore am I to understand very clearly that it is only a certain type of western film which draws a house but that most Indian films draw a house?

A. Yes.

Q. Well, on the whole I would take it, therefore, that the Indian film is more popular to the audiences you are catering for than the western films?

A. Yes.

Q. Well, now, I don't want to pry into your private affairs but could you produce, in order to satisfy us on that point, your box office receipts from particular films?

A. Why not. There is no reason why I shouldn't.

Q. It will be treated as confidential. It will definitely substantiate your evidence that this is a fact, that Indian films are a paying proposition.

A. Yes, every time.

Q. And if you could show the receipts from different types, it would also be a guide as to the type of picture which was a paying proposition.

A. Certainly I will.

Q. Do you take the trouble to go down to Bombay and see what films are being made there?

A. I go there once every year.

**Q.** I understand these film companies are turning out from 12 to 18 pictures a year and there are some six companies at work, so that every month there are some 6 new films produced. You don't have a chance of seeing these or booking them for your theatres?

**A.** When I go there every year I am there for about a week or 10 days and I see as many shows as I possibly can.

**Q.** You have not thought of getting some person in Bombay to go as your agent and preview pictures?

**A.** There is another difficulty—the producers in Bombay know me very well and it is on account of my approaching them over and over again that one of them has opened a branch over here for the Punjab.

**Q.** Which is that?

**A.** The Shahdra Company. And another opened their branch in Delhi—the Krishna Film Company. That is also at my instigation. I was told when I got back from Srinagar that the Kohinoor is also contemplating opening a branch for the Punjab. At that time they hadn't pictures suitable for my theatres—they had only pictures that were good enough for the Bombay Presidency.

**Q.** Now, would you explain that point further? I want to understand that.

**A.** Yes, when I approached those producers to hire their films to me at a reasonable rent or on the percentage system they didn't agree. They wanted that I should take at least 8 pictures from them at a rental of Rs. 500 each for 4 days run.

**Q.** That is Rs. 125 a day.

**Mr. Green:** That is a species of "block" booking?

**A.** That is 'block' booking. I told them (I might be able to get a copy of the letter I sent them): "You send your agent down to the Punjab and let him study the conditions. If I am wrong, I will pay his expenses and your price. If I am right, you pay his own expenses and give me the pictures at the price that I want". They didn't agree to that.

**Colonel Crawford:** So, at the moment, you are having some difficulty in coming to any decent and reasonable arrangement with the producers?

**A.** Quite. It is a very big expense. I could not show these Indian films one after another. I had to put at least one month between the pictures. And every time their agent was coming from Bombay to exhibit the film at a percentage which they wanted—50 per cent. out of gross takings, *plus* the railway freight and the board and lodging of their agent while he was in Lahore. And they worked it out to a very big figure which I could not accept.

**Q.** Have you seen, for instance, "Tainted Virtue"?—the Indian produced film called "Tainted Virtue"?

**A.** No, Sir. I have been away in Kashmir for some months.

**Q.** Have you heard of the film "Sacrifice"?

**A.** I have read about it.

**Q.** Have you made any efforts to secure it for your theatre?

**A.** I only read about it last night.

**Q.** It is a fine film.

**A.** My friend, Mr. Bhatia of the Associated Press, tells me it has been forfeited.

**Mr. Green:** It has been licensed by the Bombay Board of Censors and it has been exhibited for at least three weeks with great appreciation.

**A.** Well, I have got a great deal to say about the Bombay Board.

**Colonel Crawford:** I notice you say that you get the educated class of Indian to your theatre on fairly rare occasions when you show some Indian mythological films. Now, is that on account of the pictures you are showing or is the accommodation in your theatre not attractive?

A. The accommodation of my theatre is for a thousand seats.

Q. Yes, but is it adequately comfortable?—absolutely of the latest stamp? I am just wondering whether your audiences are shy because you do not provide what they consider the necessary standards of comfort.

A. I think my theatre is one of the best. When it was built it was the best in all India.

Q. I want to know whether your experience of "The Light of Asia" as shown in Srinagar and Lahore was that it was popular with European audiences—did it give you a good return from European audiences?

A. Yes, Sir. But they did not like to see it twice.

Q. No. There are very few films that I would like to see twice.

A. There are some that I would like to see twice.

Q. I don't think I would go to "Ben Hur" twice, very fine film though it is. But it drew most of the people on the first occasion?

A. Oh, yes. There were big inquiries and they all say it but they enjoyed it not with the same interest that they would enjoy a big western production.

Q. So far as your European audience is concerned, they did come and it was a paying proposition. I mean, it does give us hope that decently produced Indian films will attract a European audience.

A. I think so, Sir. But not always.

Q. Well, it all depends whether they are of entertainment value?

Chairman: How does the European audience in Srinagar compare with the European audience in Lahore? Was there any difference so far as "The Light of Asia" was concerned?

A. In Srinagar I showed it to an Indian house—Europeans don't go there because it is right in the city. But in Lahore Mr. Pandya showed it.

Mr. Pandya: I had invited Europeans but only a very few came. Only a dozen people turned up.

Q. Oh, by invitation. When did you show it?

A. Last year in October. But it was successful. We ran it for one week in the Universal.

Q. With the Indian people?

A. Yes.

Colonel Crawford: How do you and your friend get the films you show at present?

Mr. Parr: We get them from the Universal, Madans, and there is another, the Alliance Trades Agency.

Q. Do you import any yourself?

A. Well, I did some time ago. Not now.

Q. It isn't a paying proposition?

A. Well, I haven't the capital. Of course, if I had the capital I would knock Madans out in a short time. It is a question of capital.

Q. Now, you gave me an idea that a monopoly in the distribution side meant the showing to the public of an indifferent standard of pictures. Is it definitely harmful from the public point of view?

A. I don't think it is definitely harmful from the public point of view because every place of importance in India has got a theatre of Messrs. Madans Theatres, Limited and they are importing the cream of the market; the public is not concerned with it, the public has got to pay 4 annas or 8 annas or a rupee or three rupees—they don't mind whether they go to the Gaiety, the Star, the Universal or Madans; the price is the same and, naturally, they will go the place where they are showing the best pictures.

Q. But if you get several of your theatres all tied up with one big theatre, who will dollop out a certain amount of good films and a large amount of bad ones to make up their programme, won't that be prejudicial to the good entertainment of the public?

**A.** Why should it be?—because there is another concern showing too.

**Q.** There is sufficient competition, that is? But I understand you have practically got to take a good number of Madans' pictures.

**A.** Yes, Sir, I have to, good and bad. I have not taken so many as my friends over here and probably if they want to enlighten the committee they might tell you what they gained on the whole of Madans turn out. They gained perhaps Rs. 500 on "The Thief of Baghdad" but I don't know how much they gained on others.

**Q.** I notice you make a great complaint against free tickets. Do you give a number of complimentary tickets?

**A.** Well, about 25 per cent. of the house is free.

*Chairman:* As much as that? Who are the people?

**Q.** Very well. We will see what we can do.

*Colonel Crawford:* I would pursue the matter. Are these so much forced out of you, or to put it the other way round, is it not definitely advantageous to the exhibitors to keep friends with the people who are doing a certain amount of business with them? I mean do you want it stopped?

**A.** We do want it stopped. But we cannot help it. There is no way out of the difficulty.

*Mr. Green:* The cure is worse than the disease?

*Colonel Crawford:* There is no possibility of a certain amount of combination amongst exhibitors to form themselves into a sort of association with a view to assisting yourselves over difficulties?

**A.** I tried, Sir, but somehow we cannot get the unity.

*Mr. Green:* I gather that you would be quite pleased to show a certain amount of educational films if you get the opportunity.

**A.** Yes, Sir.

**Q.** You mean you would show them if they were given to you free or would you pay a certain hire for them?

**A.** Well, if they are given to us free, we shall be pleased.

**Q.** Naturally. But would you pay a certain hire?

**A.** I don't think we could afford to pay.

**Q.** But supposing legislation is enacted—in fact it is possible under the present legislation—which would oblige you under the terms of your licence to show not less than 5 per cent. of the total footage in educational films, and pay hire for it? At present, I take it, there are none to be hired. Supposing Government or departments of Government were to make these educational films with a certain commercial value, a certain entertainment value, would you be prepared to show them if they could be got free?

**A.** Yes, Sir. If they have got a certain entertainment value we are prepared even to pay in proportion.

**Q.** In your answer to question No. 27 you are keen, and very rightly so, that India should not be misrepresented by means of the cinema, with which I entirely agree.

**A.** I can give you the names of the films . . .

**Q.** I do not want examples. What is your remedy? How will you stop it?

**A.** If you have a law that any firm which produces films misrepresenting Indians in any way, the whole output of that company will be banned in India.

**Q.** Surely you are referring to films made in India?

**A.** No.

**Q.** I thought you were referring to films made in India misrepresenting Indians.

**A.** No. I have given the examples. (Reads)

**Q.** Have those been exhibited in India?



A. Yes. I remember one film that was banned, "The Green Goddess". That was the limit and it was not allowed in India.

*Chairman:* All these things which you have read out were exhibited in India?

A. Yes. My suggestion is this. It is in operation now in Mexico. The Mexican Government have passed a law that if any producing unit producing a film which misrepresents . . .

*Mr. Green:* What do you mean by producing?

A. Making in the foreign country. Take, for example, Pathé produced "The Sailor Made Man". In that an Indian Rajah is ridiculed. He is made to do something which is ridiculous, he is made to do something which is absolutely impossible. If there is a law that if any producing unit produces such a film, the whole of its output will be banned out of India . . .

Q. Is there not a simpler method? Surely your point would be met by the Censor stopping that film? It could not be exhibited before it was passed by him.

A. That holds good only to India. We do not want to be ridiculed outside India as well.

Q. Your point is the censor would only operate when the film comes to India for being exhibited.

A. Yes. They won't produce, they leave off producing, as I learn from the papers, if you have such a law.

Q. The film may be produced for American consumption, and it is the American consumption that pays the American producer.

A. When there are a lot of Indian students there, they can find out and tell us.

Q. That can be done only by diplomatic action?

A. No. I think my suggestion will facilitate matters to some extent.

Q. There is only one little pendant to it. I entirely sympathise with your objection to any travesty of India, either in India or in foreign countries. Would you equally sympathise with a travesty, say, of German life being produced in India or in England, being objected to by Germans?

A. Certainly.

Q. I take it you would also object to travesties of English life?

A. Yes.

Q. Are you satisfied that the items now exhibited in India—most of them of course come from America—do truly represent English and American life?

A. I do not know about American life, but what I see from my experience of the Europeans over here, the films coming from England—from the few that I have seen—I do not think they misrepresent English life.

Q. What about the American films of the general standard?

A. When they show a plot laid in England I do not think they really misrepresent either.

Q. Would you leave the judgment in that case to Englishmen?

A. Yes, certainly, because the Englishman is the best judge of it.

Q. That is a perfectly consistent attitude. You indicate you have a grievance against the Boards of Censors, particularly against the Bombay Board. Does it mean that they are too lax?

A. They are.

Q. In what way?

A. In passing films. As far as my information goes, it is the Inspector who goes and sees the films, and the importing firms are there in Calcutta and Bombay . . .

Q. I thought you said that you had a grievance against the Board?

A. When I say "the Board" I take it to mean everybody concerned in it. My grievance is when they pass a film, sometimes there is influence brought

to bear by the distributor. A film is passed in Bombay and when it comes out to this part of the country, all of a sudden it is banned.

Q. That is your grievance?

A. Yes.

Q. Let us get on to remedies. You are in favour of a central board?

A. Yes.

Q. You would prefer it to be at Delhi?

A. Yes, those people would not be there to put their influence on them.

Q. If a central board is started all the importers and distributors will have their representatives there?

A. As a matter of fact, I cannot put as much influence on a certain person as my father can.

Q. The board should, in your view, be constituted of all classes of people, officials and non-officials, from every community?

A. Yes.

Q. What size would that board be?

A. I think about one from each province.

Q. But take the Punjab alone. Would you be represented by one, would one be representative of all the communities in the Punjab?

A. Generally these Government portfolios are given to one person. Once it is given to a Hindu, at another time to a Muhammadan, a third time to a Sikh and so on, and the same method may be adopted.

Q. They will take it in turns?

A. Yes.

Q. There is going to be representation of all provinces, one representative from each province. It might conceivably happen that sometimes a whole board might be constituted of Hindus?

A. It is for Government to see that it is not so.

Q. Government will have to correct it?

A. Yes.

Q. Would these gentlemen be stipendiary or honorary workers?

A. Nobody will do it for love.

Q. Better still I see you would like an experienced, broad-minded censor working whole time, well-paid, with an advisory board.

A. Yes.

Q. It has already been said that one whole time censor can hardly see every film which is presented for censorship to-day in the whole of India. That would mean he would have to work about ten hours a day. Therefore you would be, in case of necessity, prepared to have 2 or 3 stipendiaries?

A. If necessity demands it.

Q. Would you prefer to have every film examined by two officers simultaneously?

A. If he is a broad-minded, well paid officer, one will do.

Q. You are not frightened of the judgment of one man, or of the possibility of influence being brought to bear on one officer?

A. If he is above those things I do not think there is any possibility.

Q. What kind of pay would you pay to such a man?

A. I cannot say.

Mr. Neogy: You will leave it to the I.C.S.?

Mr. Green: I do not know if any I.C.S. officer would take up so invidious a position. Having got your central board however constituted, would it not be a serious hindrance to producers of Indian films, particularly of topical films, if they had to send their films possibly from Rangoon to Delhi, or from Bombay to Delhi?

A. The Deputy Commissioner or the District Magistrate is there and he has got powers.....

Q. I am taking about original certification. Your idea is to have a central board and no film can be exhibited surely unless it has been certified by that board?

A. It does not take away the powers of the Deputy Commissioner.

Q. The Deputy Commissioner can stop a film but he cannot license it.

A. Yes. He has licensed for me.

Q. I am sorry to inform you, if that is so, he is acting against the law.

A. I still hold a certificate from the Deputy Commissioner of Lahore licensing a film for me.

Q. Was it before the passing of the Act?

A. November last.

Q. For public exhibition?

A. Yes.

Chairman: Can you give us the license?

A. I will see if I can find it.

Q. What film was that?

A. The "Gama-Goonga fight at Patiala," a topical film which I produced in conjunction with another. We rushed it through over here and we got a license from the Deputy Commissioner.

Mr. Green: I am sorry to say that your license is not valid. You consider that all Deputy Commissioners throughout India should be authorised to license individual films?

A. Topicals.

Q. For exhibition in their own districts or throughout India?

A. In their own districts, and in the meantime you can go and get it passed in Delhi.

Q. That is a perfectly feasible suggestion. Another suggestion is, besides having a central board we should have a provincial board in each province which is to deal with all Indian-produced films and topical films. Would you prefer that, or would you prefer to have the Deputy Commissioner giving a license for the district only?

A. I would rather prefer the Deputy Commissioner.

Mr. Neogy: I want to understand the exact position. You said in one instance when you approached the Madans for a particular film they asked for Rs. 2,500?

A. Yes.

Q. But were you asked to take other films along with it?

A. No.

Q. I take it you had the choice of buying one particular film of your own choice?

A. Yes.

Q. Only if you had agreed to take a few more along with it you would have got a sort of concession? That is all?

A. Yes.

Q. But we understand quite a different thing when you talk of blind and block booking. You were not compelled to take a particular lot?

A. No. The condition was this: "Take so many pictures and we will charge so much. If you want this picture you will have to pay so much."

Q. "If you take all these in a lot you pay less. If you take one particular film you will have to pay a little more?"

A. Yes. It is a question of getting at one's nose by reaching round the back of one's neck—in a roundabout manner.

**Mr. Coatsman:** Had Madans already exhibited that film?

**A.** Yes.

**Mr. Neogy:** Is that also the position with the Universal and Pathé or does it differ in any way?

**A.** The same system prevails.

**Q.** That is to say, you have your choice there also. You can pick out a particular film and take that.....

**A.** And pay an exorbitant price.

**Q.** More than you would otherwise pay?

**Chairman:** That happens in every trade.

**A.** Everybody does it. I have done it myself.

**Mr. Neogy:** As for the other pictures which you are asked to take along with the one of your choice as a condition of getting a concession, have you any say in the selection of those? Do the distributors say, "You want one? We can give you one for so much, but if you take eight, pay so much"? Have you any power to make your own choice with regard to the other seven?

**A.** It all depends. Supposing the Universal have got two big productions, when you go to them and want those two big productions you take half a dozen more from the rest.

**Q.** And those six also you are allowed to pick out yourself? So, that is not blind booking?

**A.** It is block booking.

**Q.** Let us not quarrel about words. You said that in the case of the Indian pictures also some such system obtains, that is to say, in one particular instance you were asked to take eight pictures in a lot?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** And there also, I take it, you could make your choice of the eight?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** You had to take eight, but you were in a position to dictate which eight?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** You say that the Madans control 100 theatres.....

**A.** 60 theatres and some more in association.

**Q.** I want to understand the exact position of those theatres which you say are run in association with Madans.

**A.** Those in association with Madans are taking pictures all the 12 months from them.

**Q.** Exclusively from Madans?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** They have not got the right to take anything from outside?

**A.** Yes. They are given the pictures either on a percentage basis or on hire.

**Q.** About the quota of Indian films, you agree to a particular length being shown every day. Supposing two alternatives were placed before you, a proportion of the total film length shown in a year, which you can make up either by exhibiting a short length every day, or by exhibiting, say, Indian serials for certain days in the year?

**A.** To help the industry?

**Q.** Which would you prefer?

**A.** Every programme must have a certain amount of quota.

**Q.** That won't help the production of serials, high class dramas?

**A.** No. But what of that?

**Q.** Would you mind if an alternative were left like this: Either make up the quota bit by bit every day, or make it up in a year?

**A.** I do not mind it. If it were left to the exhibitor it would be good.

**Q.** You say Madans enjoy a certain amount of monopoly. You have stated that they get hold of the cream of the pictures. If each individual theatre proprietor had to negotiate and purchase those first rate films, do you think they would be in as advantageous a position as Madans are for the purpose?

**A.** My grievance against Madans is not so much in their capacity as exhibitors as in their capacity as distributors. I have no grievance against them. They are putting in the money and they are taking the profit.

**Q.** Your objection practically comes to this, that a combination of a picture distributing agency with an exhibiting concern is not very beneficial from the point of view of others?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** But at the same time you have given us an instance in which an individual theatre proprietor was enabled to put up sufficient competition with Madans so as to force the closing down of a particular theatre owned by Madans?

**A.** That was myself.

**Q.** So it does not seem that the position of the exhibitors, owing to Madans' competition, is so very difficult?

**A.** The position was this. Madans took the Empire first, then the Empress in the city. They then took the Elphinstone and the Excelsior. They converted the Empire into a dance hall and they closed the Empress. From these four cinemas Madans were taking their benefit. I was conducting only one cinema in Lahore and competing with one particular cinema in the city. Then the whole of their attention was diverted to the three theatres in the civil lines and that gave me scope which is not available in other places.

**Q.** So that individual ownership of individual theatres gives you a greater advantage over an organisation like the Madans. Let us leave the matter there. With regard to the point that my friend, Mr. Green, made, whether you would exhibit films depicting western life which might be considered a misrepresentation from the western point of view, you deal mostly with American films? What percentage of the American films, of which you have first hand knowledge, represents life in England?

**A.** I think about 15 per cent.

**Q.** The rest has nothing to do with England?

**A.** No.

**Chairman:** You have been to England?

**A.** No.

**Mr. Neogy:** But you can judge from the subjects and the literature that you get in connection with the pictures?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** In so far as films depicting American life are concerned, the very fact that Americans care to produce such films perhaps tantamounts to a judgment by the American people themselves that they do not consider them a misrepresentation?

**A.** Yes. When I said that India should not be misrepresented by foreign films outside India, what I meant was this. If Indian actors are made to take part in the pictures in which they do whatever they exactly do over here I have got no objection. I should not ask anybody to put a blind over the eyes of the foreigners.

**Mr. Coalman:** You mentioned that you paid Madans Rs. 2,500?

**A.** I was asked to pay.

**Q.** Can you tell us what you paid?

A. I did not take it.

Q. What is the highest price that you have paid for one of Madans?

A. Over a Rs. 1,000. Not to Madans but to others.

Q. But you have taken pictures from Madans?

A. Yes, I have paid Rs. 1,500 for a picture taken over from Madans for a day's run in Kashmir.

Q. Have you any idea what Madans paid for that picture?

A. I do not know. As regards big pictures that Madans are getting I know of one concern only, that is, the United Artists. I am not quite sure on the point, but I am 90 per cent. sure, that from the United Artists they get pictures on a percentage basis.

Q. You talked about Madans having the cream of the market and you gave us to understand that by that you meant the cream of the productions of foreign countries.

A. Of the world's market.

Q. Are you sure of that yourself?

A. Yes.

Q. From what I have seen I do not think it is the cream of the world's market.

**Written Statement of Mr. A. YUSUF ALI, C.B.E., Member of the Board of Film Censors, Punjab, dated the 5th November 1927.**

(Only the Questions on which I have something to say have been answered.)

1. I am a member of the Punjab Board of Film Censors.

2. (a) In Lahore the principal cinemas are situated in McLeod Road. They are frequented mainly by the educated classes, not much by the illiterate, who resort chiefly to the cinemas in the City, of which I know very little.

Indians of the educated classes are using the cinemas more and more every day.

(b) and (c) About 10 per cent. English; about 10 per cent. Indians, adult residents about the Civil station; about 30-40 per cent. adolescents of impressionable age (including College boys); about 10 per cent. children under 14; and the remainder a floating population.

3. Crimes, accidents, passionate love dramas, and sensational American films.

4. Exhibitors have a single eye to profit. They get the films that pay, but they are generally cheap and nasty.

5. Occasionally one or two Indian films have been shown, but they have drawn no audiences: (a) Poor quality; (b) no; (c) western films are more popular.

6. (a) and (b) I doubt it, but the experiment has never been tried. The Communal antagonism makes a film, popular with one section, distasteful to another. Religious antagonisms are insuperable. There is a good future for good educational, historical, travel, and topical films among the educated; and travel and topical films among the illiterate.

11. Practically none in Lahore.

16-18. No.

21. I am strongly opposed to this. The work is too delicate and requires too intimate a knowledge of local conditions to be entrusted to a State agency.

22. No, until India understands and is understood by the Empire better.

23. There is very little social or economic intercourse between the Dominions and India. On the contrary there is a great deal of antagonism and

misunderstanding, which makes the proposal under present conditions premature.

24. (a) Yes: most of those exhibited are demoralising. Even films which would be harmless in (say) America or England carry harmful suggestions to Indian audiences.

(b) Yes, judged with reference to Indian conditions.

(c) In Indian conditions sensational sex films are harmful; crime films are harmful in any conditions. The harm is greatest to young and immature minds, but also extends to grown-up people. Politically the exhibition of immoral life in the west is harmful as it destroys confidence in the Government by a western people and brings into contempt western civilisation. In this last respect it is also harmful to the true education and development of India on social and national lines.

(d) Not yet.

(e) and (f) Two cases of theft (one a case of organised bicycle theft by students showed the influence of the Crime Cinema).

25. Yes, decidedly.

26. (a) Yes.

(b) The Buddha film which was so much praised in England was, I believe, viewed with disgust in Burma. On my mind, as a friend of Buddhist ethics, it produced an unfavourable impression.

27. (a) Yes.

(b) I believe there are some, but I have no specific instances in my mind. None of the films were produced in India. We can imagine the result when we consider what dreadful ideas people have of India in the west.

29. No. Most of the uneducated adults in this country are like children.

30. No, because such a prohibition would be difficult to enforce. About 80 per cent. of the children do not know their own ages *precisely*. And there are no suitable childrens' films.

31—38. Censorship is new in India, and we have not enough experience of its working.

40. If a film is allowed, I do not see how we can censor its posters and advertisements.

41. No.

42. If we had a satisfactory Press it could do much in this way. But about our existing Press the less said the better. The public bodies are not yet sufficiently organised to act as censors or as guides to public taste.

**Oral Evidence of Mr. YUSUF ALI, C.B.E., Principal, Islamia College, Lahore, and Member of the Punjab Board of Film Censors, on Saturday, the 25th November 1927.**

*Chairman* : Do you go to the cinema very often yourself?

A. Well, the average quality is so low that I do not frequent cinemas but I always go with an object, three objects. First of all, I feel it my duty as a member of the Film Board to keep myself acquainted. Secondly, I have been and am connected with education here and I want to know what sort of films boys go to see. And thirdly, I go as a general citizen who wants to keep himself abreast of things.

Q. How long have you been doing this?

A. The Board only began work last month. It was gazetted two months ago. With education I have been connected for the last two years here, over two years, and I have been living in Lahore during that time. In England I frequently went to the cinema. I think it is one of the agencies for public education that has come to stay.

*Q.* Exactly; and entertainment also?

*A.* And entertainment too.

*Q.* Now, you have seen films both in England and in India. Do you think there is any striking difference between those exhibited in England and those exhibited here?

*A.* I have also visited cinemas, I may say, in France, Holland and Norway.

*Q.* But I should like to know more about England and India.

*A.* Yes, there is a great difference. First of all the building in which you see the film in England is very much better.

*Q.* But the films themselves?

*A.* As regards the films themselves also, England has the advantage. The film generally is more in touch with the life of the people that you see around you. Here it is an exotic. The best films here are only exotics. Take a film like that of Buddha which was actually prepared here in Gwalior. The characters are supposed to be Indian and so on but they did not act as such. I cannot help saying it is as much of an exotic as any European film.

*Q.* You mean "The Light of Asia"?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Have you seen it?

*A.* I saw it here in Lahore. It was exhibited here.

*Q.* But what I want to know is whether there is a marked difference between the Western film shown in England and the Western film shown here.

*A.* Yes, it seems to me that the worst and the most sensational are selected for exhibition in India. That is my impression.

*Mr. Green :* Don't you confine your statement to Lahore when you say India?

*A.* Yes, I have not much experience of films shown in Bombay and Calcutta.

*Q.* From the advertisements I am inclined to believe you get rather an old fashioned type of film here.

*A.* Quite. Things that one has seen 2 or 3 years ago in England suddenly come here and parade as new films. Many of them are worn out, so that they are not worth looking at; and of course many of them are selected for the very qualities for which they would be rejected in England, except in the lowest class of cinema houses.

*Chairman :* And you think they are not of the same quality or technique?

*A.* Decidedly not.

*Q.* You think they are used up films, those that are shown in Lahore?

*A.* Yes. Not even new copies as far as I can judge except those that are made here.

*Q.* Well, what do you think is the effect on the youth of the country of the cinema?

*A.* Very bad; altogether mischievous I think. Futile where not mischievous.

*Q.* I suppose it is so also in England.

*A.* But to a less extent, because in England even the youth that sees a film, if there is anything objectionable in it, is able to connect it with the actual facts of life that he sees around him. He is able to make allowances, whereas here it is absolutely in the air and somehow they catch hold of the weak points. For instance, Mr. Parkinson, I notice from the press report, gave an example of a theft by a student in which the student said he had learnt it from the film.



*Q.* That was 12 years ago in Ceylon. It is a misleading report in the press that makes out it occurred here.

*A.* I don't know whether Mr. Parkinson mentioned it from his own experience but I mentioned it on the Board. It occurred here last year.

*Mr. Neogy :* The theft occurred here. Mr. Parkinson's statement may have been with reference to another incident.

*Colonel Crawford :* Yes, that was a case of molesting a woman that occurred in Ceylon.

*A.* Anyway if it was an independent experience of his, it is corroborated by my own.

*Chairman :* Then the accused might, more or less, have pleaded the influence of the cinema in extenuation of his crime.

*A.* Quite possibly.

*Q.* You see, to learn to steal you need not go to the cinema.

*A.* No, it is the method in which it was done. It was a bicycle theft.

*Q.* What was the method.

*A.* He saw a film in which apparently some people had banded themselves together and organised an expedition to a school or college in which a large number of bicycles were placed together. They said "we can do the same", and so they clubbed together and went and stole a number of bicycles.

*Q.* Was it a number of bicycles or one bicycle?

*A.* I think there were several stolen, and the question was asked "What gave you the idea"? The accused said they clubbed together and saw how easy it was.

*Q.* You know that both the Inspector of Police and the Local Government have reported to us that they cannot attribute any increase in crime to the cinema.

*A.* Yes. The volume of student crime compared with the total volume of crime is negligible but sometimes an educational man sees things that the police does not see in its actual bearings on the lives of the students?

*Q.* But surely a criminal tendency is not created in college youths by seeing the cinema?

*A.* I think in some cases, yes. I know of cases of theft, or breaking into rooms even, found in more than one college in Lahore. I was surprised at it but it is so.

*Q.* And you suspect college students of it?

*A.* Well, they have been suspected; in some cases the property and culprit have been found. In some cases the actual culprit has not been found but the property has been restored; and the idea is that it must have been some clever person who knew all about the surroundings and not an outside thief.

*Q.* You don't attribute it to the cinema?

*A.* Not entirely, but there is an influence that way. I don't mean every person who goes to the cinema becomes a thief or a criminal; very far from it.

*Q.* Was your Board consulted about the banning of "Sacrifice" here?

*A.* No. I have been attending all the meetings but I don't remember that matter coming up. We have only held two meetings so far. We were gazetted about 2 months ago; our first meeting was held last month; and we are meeting again in a day or two. Possibly it will be on the agenda next week.

*Q.* But it has been already banned.

*A.* Our Board may not have been consulted. I think it is possible that Government heard about it from Bombay or had some objections raised by the Deputy Commissioner of Lahore.

*Mr. Ncooy :* It is dated the 22nd November.

*Chairman :* I suppose you would like to be consulted in such matters.

*A.* I think it would be advisable, but still I don't think our Board would raise objections if Government had any inside information and wanted to take prompt action. I should expect the Board to be consulted, but I don't think our Board would resent it if it was not consulted. We should like to know the circumstances.—Of course I am speaking entirely for myself.

*Mr. Green :* Supposing it was a film that had been certified by your own Board?

*A.* Then we should object of course. It would not be fair.

*Chairman :* But after your Board came into existence that the Local Government should have taken action without consulting you seems rather surprising, especially when one Board had already certified the film. It is a severe handicap to any Indian effort if such things take place.

*A.* I should like to know more about it. I think Nawab Muzaffar Khan told you that the Deputy Commissioner in Lahore has independent and concurrent powers...

*Mr. Green :* He has power to suspend a film. Every District Magistrate in India has that.

*A.* That I think is quite right, because our Board may meet once a month whereas all the mischief may be done in the meantime.

*Chairman :* But what is the good of the existence of the Board if you are going to take it like that?

*A.* In this way. I think our Board is representative. We have women on it; we have different interests represented on it, and it is possible that films passed by the Deputy Commissioner may be open to certain objections. Then we can consider and give a reasoned opinion.

*Mr. Green :* How can a Deputy Commissioner license a film?

*A.* I don't mean license but he may represent to the Government or he may take no action.

*Q.* If it is an already certified film he raises no objection?

*A.* If we certify, I don't think he can object without consulting us.

*Chairman :* Anyway you are not concerned with it except as a member of the Board. I wonder what the Board think of it.

*A.* I, personally, as a member of the Board, would like to know the circumstances in which this action was taken before I could give any opinion on it.

*Q.* In paragraph 4 you state that exhibitors get the films that pay but they are generally cheap and nasty. But of course that is so with all trade.

*A.* I am not making any special reflection on the trade.

*Q.* It is only a statement of a fact?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* And you think the only remedy, if any, is to produce better films?

*A.* And to improve the taste.

*Q.* Now, in that matter you agree that the film has come to stay?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* You cannot ban it altogether as some people would like to do?

*A.* No.

*Q.* Do you think there is a duty on the part of Government to aid and guide the growth of the Indian industry?

*A.* If you mean it as a general proposition, perhaps yes; but if you mean it with reference to the Government of India and Indian conditions, decidedly no.

*Q.* Why not?

A. As everybody knows the Government in India is not a national Government and it cannot lay its finger on the pulse of the people in the way that a national Government can, and, therefore, if it intervenes, it might prohibit films that are really desirable or allow films that are objected to.

Q. I see your point of view. It may be a film appealing to the patriotism of the people which the Government might prohibit?

A. There are a number of things that might cause misunderstanding. As it is constituted at present I don't think our Government ought to intervene in this matter at all, either in the matter of guiding the public taste, because that is very largely a matter of opinion, or in the matter of manufacturing films.

Q. What I had in mind was in the shape of cheap loans on easy terms.

A. My objection would apply there too, because they would not be able to judge which companies to give loans to and which not.

Q. Then you would allow the industry to take its own course? Already you are not satisfied with the taste created, so it may grow worse and worse and it may call for more drastic action later on?

A. I would certainly ask Government to take action in more cases than they do now.

Q. By way of censoring?

A. By way of censoring and keeping a complete control. Governments in India have until recently been more or less confined to performing police functions and I think our Governments are admirably adapted to that; but I do not think they are yet quite adapted for stepping into the ethical and social functions of Government.

Q. I see your point of view; but at the same time this is a thing which you cannot stop and which you should not stop, and it requires some healthy guidance and assistance. Who else can do it except the Government who are in charge of the welfare of the people?

A. I do not think there is any other agency of an authoritative kind, but on the other hand I look forward to a better spirit among the people as the years pass and in matters of taste I am for allowing the growth of public sentiment.

Q. Well, of course you do not mind indirect action being taken by Government such as making foreign films more costly. You complain of the stuff that is coming in; then why not impose a heavy duty?

A. I would approve of that provided the machinery ensures that good films reach us. I expressed some doubt whether Government machinery, as at present constituted, was competent to judge about these matters, but if that disadvantage were removed by some fairly representative committee I would not object. I think it would be a good principle.

Q. Supposing you have a heavy duty? You want a machinery which will judge afterwards whether they are really useful films for the instruction of the public, in which case you will give a rebate or recommend a rebate of that kind.

A. And in the opposite case put an extra duty on anything you don't approve of?

Q. That is a very complicated machinery.

A. Very. That is why I rather fight shy of it.

Q. At any rate you are for removing the duty or putting only a nominal duty on raw films and machinery which is required to make films in the country?

A. A light duty.

Q. You are for lightening the duty on the raw materials brought in for making films in this country?

A. Yes. Provided the other thing is also kept in view, that only good films should be made here.

*Q.* How are you going to guarantee that good films are made here? Of course there is always a censorship. Whether they be Indian or foreign films, they will be subject to censorship and where they are objectionable they will be censored; but of course you cannot censor too much, just as apparently it is happening in the Punjab. I mean, it is a great handicap to the industry if a good effort is to be banned in one province and allowed in another province. As it is, everywhere we hear cries that capital is shy and Indian enterprise very weak in this direction; and now even that little enterprise which people show, if you throw cold water like this, will grow less and there will be great hindrance to the growth of the industry.

*A.* Have an All India Committee, besides the provincial censors.

*Q.* Will you have it this way? Have provincial boards, and where provinces are in doubt whether it is permissible to show a particular picture in a particular province, that should be decided by an All India Committee and not merely by a local authority?

*A.* If it is only a provincial matter it should be decided only by the provincial committee, but if one province decides one way and another province wants to decide another way in what I may call a federal matter, then I think they should settle it by reference to an All India Board.

*Q.* You cannot have one province banning a film passed by another province.

*A.* That is possible. A film that may be unobjectionable in Bombay may be very harmful in the Punjab.

*Q.* But such things cannot be common, they may be rare. But what is your objection to referring it to a central authority in which all provinces are represented?

*A.* I should have no objection to it provided the central authority bears in mind the local conditions. I do not contemplate a state in which simply because a film is passed by one province it should be passed in all the provinces *ipso facto*.

*Q.* Ordinarily it should have currency in other provinces unless some objection is taken to it, but the final decision should rest with the central authority in which all provinces should be represented?

*A.* Yes. I don't object to it.

*Q.* You are definitely against adopting the policy suggested by the Imperial Conference until India understands and is understood by the different parts of the Empire. How do you expect India to understand the other parts and the other parts to be understood by India? Don't you think the film is a very good method?

*A.* Films may be one method, but I don't think, for a long time to come, our Indian films are likely to make their way in the rest of the Empire. They are not sufficiently good in quality.

*Q.* If other parts of the Empire are anxious to make themselves known to us by sending their films, let them make a present of them here and we will accept them, is that what you mean?

*A.* I think we should judge of them on their merits.

*Q.* But you are not prepared to buy them on the usual terms?

*A.* No, because it will be one sided; we shall have nothing to offer. India is weak in her production, and with that weakness, free trade would not be of real use to her. What is more, there is a danger of the Indian industry suffering thereby. I am an out and out free trader, but there must be a certain amount of fairness.

*Q.* This policy is opposed to your free trade principle because it may entail a preference to British Empire films?

*A.* That, I think, would be open to some objections in the same way as preference in goods of merchandise, simply because of the weakness of India.

Q. Then you agree that some steps should be taken for making each other understood?

A. Yes, for instance, one method would be the method that you have followed as India's delegate to Australia.

Q. It is not possible for all people to follow that.

A. I wish there were more inter-flow of people between the different parts of the Empire, so that they may make themselves known better.

Q. In fact, you would have Agents General in each part of the Empire, to circulate their literature, and you think it must be the Government's duty to circulate their literature here, and that we should also send them our literature so that they may take more interest in us?

A. In a recent history that I have published, 'The Making of India,' I have said in the preface that I want India to be better understood in the rest of the Empire.

Q. You think that most of the films that are exhibited here are demoralising?

A. Judging from my experience in Lahore, they are.

Q. You think it creates a false impression of the westerner in the mind of the easterner?

A. That is only one aspect.

Q. If that is so, it is more for the English people to take care of themselves and not for India to ask them to take care of themselves?

A. European civilization occupies a special place in India, and if we cut the ground from under it, we shall be cutting the ground from under our own feet.

Q. Why do those people allow themselves to be misrepresented here? Why should they not stop the circulation of such films in their own country?

A. But I think we have a duty in the matter too, so far as it affects our people here.

Q. If the films have a demoralising effect on the people of this country, then of course India must take action, but if they merely tend to lower the westerner in the eyes of the easterner, do you think there is any reason for us to take action here?

A. So long as there is a western Government here, yes, we must take action. It is our house and we ought not to allow anything unseemly to be shown here. The unseemliness also consists in misrepresenting other people.

Q. But they misrepresent themselves, is it not?

A. Not quite. They represent a certain phase which may be perfectly true, but to picture out that phase and then hold it up before a big ignorant crowd is likely to create mischief.

Q. Don't they show such films in England?

A. There such films will not be exhibited except in the lowest class cinemas.

Q. Then why do the public go and patronise them?

A. A certain class of people do go. Here the minds of our educated classes are demoralised.

Q. So long as you lay emphasis on that aspect of it, I am at one with you.

A. I think that is one form of demoralisation. You may have demoralisation although the picture may not be really immoral in the ordinary sense of the term. Even if you allow somebody else to tell a story you have a moral responsibility. I think you owe a moral duty to the people here to tell them what is true and what is of good report.

Q. I hope they will listen to us in other matters too. Then, you are firmly of the opinion that some of these films have a demoralising effect on the

people of our country, and it is up to us to take some steps to better the state of affairs?

A. Yes, certainly.

Q. I was particularly struck with your statement in paragraph 29 where you say that most of the uneducated adults in this country are like children, which is a very sorry feature.

A. But it is a fact.

Q. Don't you think the film is a means of educating them?

A. If you have good films.

Q. Therefore every effort must be made to improve the films and you cannot wait till the masses improve themselves by means of the primary education, whereas you think that the film would be a most effective method of educating them?

A. One very effective method.

Q. Don't you think public money will be better spent in producing healthy films for show to the masses, telling them what sort of conditions exist in other parts of the empire, how they live, their surroundings and things of that sort?

A. Yes, in the abstract, but again the considerations that I have mentioned before come in. Public money would be spent by means of a machinery which, I think, is not competent to spend it correctly.

Q. Then you are not for classifying films as for adults only?

A. I have explained the reason. You cannot always tell the age of children and it will lead to difficulties in administration and, possibly, to blackmail by the lower agency.

*Colonel Crawford* : You said that you were disappointed with the quality of the films shown here. Has the quality suffered only from the point of view of technique or also from the point of view of the story depicted?

A. I think both, but the latter more than the former. The technique is bad, but we can forgive that if the story were better.

Q. You were talking of the necessity to improve the taste of the public as one of the means of dealing with the evil if the evil exists at all. You consider that the Government agency is restricted in its ability to deal with the evil in that it is not an indigenous Government. Suppose you had an indigenous Government, would it be a proper agency?

A. I say national, with a further implication. In India you may have an indigenous agency, but we are broken up into factions and religions and sects and communities, so that the mere fact of there being an indigenous agency does not get over the difficulties.

*Mr. Green* : Then you think it must be a homogeneous agency as well?

A. It must be a national agency which should interpret correctly the taste of the majority of healthy-minded people.

*Colonel Crawford* : You take it that Indian life in Bombay is very cosmopolitan, and there is not that intensity of sectional feeling that exists probably elsewhere. Would not an elected Board of Censors in Bombay give you a proper agency?

A. It is only a matter of comparison. Even in Bombay I know there are classes of people who would be entirely alien to any particular Board that you may elect. Take the mill population of Bombay. I have not been in touch with them quite lately, but a few years ago I knew them fairly well, and I should be reluctant to say that the university class understood the mill population. I don't think it would be true to say that. If that is so, you again have that element wanting which I consider is necessary, the homogeneous element to represent and interpret correctly.

Q. Then you will have to wait till doomsday till those ideal conditions are achieved?

A. Roughly you find it in homogeneous countries. I don't say that Oxford or Cambridge represents the population of England correctly, but I think that when Cambridge or Oxford men go to East End settlements they learn a good deal of their life, they know a great deal more of the people as a whole than we find in India.

Q. Then you don't think that an elected board of censors taken from a cosmopolitan town like Bombay would meet your requirements for the whole country?

A. No.

Q. I was very interested in your answer to the Chairman regarding the question of misrepresentation of western civilization, the good points of which, I understand, India is desirous of taking for herself. But I presume the Indian as a rule is not able to draw a line between an American, an Englishman or a Frenchman?

A. In fact, I have been told by a Maulvi that he goes to the cinemas merely to see what English people do at Home, but he only sees American backwoodsmen or crooks or forgers.

Chairman: I suppose American backwoodsmen are different from the backwoodsmen of England? You have travelled much more than I have done.

A. I have not been to America, but I have seen practically every other country in the world. In America, life is unformed, and, in unformed life, you will have a number of nooks and corners which you cannot imagine in a country like England.

Q. That is possibly a danger?

A. Yes.

Mr. Green: You deprecate any Government interference and yet you desire to see the films now exhibited being improved?

A. I deprecate Government interference in manufacturing or producing films. On the other hand, I want strong action on the part of the Government in matters in which they are advised that any mischief is being done.

Q. I don't suppose it is quite fair to ask you this question. Were your views known when you were appointed a member of the Board of Censors, and do you come to loggerheads with your colleagues?

A. I am generally a man of peace and get on well with everyone.

Q. But you have strong views on the nature of the films exhibited, and therefore we trust we may see the moral tone of those in this province elevated. Having been a film censor myself, I am interested in it, because every Board is faced with difficulty: where to draw the line?

A. We are only a baby Board so far. I think I ought to correct the impression, if I have given that impression, that I am altogether for or against any interference everywhere. I do want to give the cinema industry, like any other industry, its fair chance, but I think the moral interests of the people are supreme and should be supreme.

Mr. Neogy: I take it that persons of your education are not liable to be misled by certain kinds of western films which you do not like to be exhibited in India?

A. I hope not.

Q. You think there is not much danger if Englishmen see these pictures at Home?

A. I don't say that the worst films are altogether innocuous to anybody. I think in a subtle way anything that is demoralising must do harm. If I constantly went and saw the worst films, I think it would debase my taste, and I should like to get away from such films.

Q. Apart from that, certain kinds of films would not have an evil influence upon the more educated classes?

A. That is so.

Q. There are big cities like Calcutta and Bombay where the proportion of the educated people is comparatively large. In those cities there are people, who, though not educated, see certain weak points of western civilization every day of their life. For instance, take the taxi drivers, who perhaps have a poorer opinion of the western civilization than people who go to the cinemas.

A. I don't know why you mention the taxi drivers.

Q. Because I myself have seen things in passing taxis in Calcutta. I do not know what the kitmatgarh thinks about the western civilization. You therefore propose to have two different standards for the purpose of censorship, one for Calcutta and another for Lahore?

A. Intangibly there would be different standards, but I don't think they can be expressed in words, nor can they be codified in rules. We cannot lay down categorically that some films are for Calcutta and some are for Lahore. The whole thing is intangible, and the object can be achieved by having a good selection.

Q. Would you then advocate the adoption of a standard throughout India that would suit the rural population of the Punjab or the most backward places in the whole of the country? Which standard are you going to adopt?

A. I would not suggest cast iron rules or cast iron standards for any place. I would leave it fairly elastic, to be judged according to circumstances and according to places.

Q. Would you be prepared to support a limited certificate being given to a certain picture, that it might be shown only in certain places but not in others?

A. If there were a representative All India Board, then that might be possible, but I would deprecate that for provincial boards. For instance, we in the Punjab are really not entitled to say that a certain film is suitable for Quetta.

Q. So far as you are concerned, you would be quite prepared to accept one standard for the whole of the Punjab?

A. I would not say that. For instance, there are things which may be quite harmless in the city of Lahore, but which may create a flame on the frontier where there are different conditions. I should contemplate our Board to look at it from a broad and reasonable point of view.

### **Oral Evidence of Mr. AMBALAL S. PANDYA of the Universal Pictures Corporation, on Saturday, the 26th November 1927.**

*Chairman:* You are the local agent of the Universal Pictures Corporation?

A. Yes.

Q. You do your business through the agent in Bombay?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you supply films to all the theatres here or only to some of them?

A. I supply films to four theatres in Lahore.

Q. Do the four theatres take their films from you alone or do they take them from other firms as well?

A. They take from others as well. There is no contract that they should take films from us only; they can take them from any place they like.

Q. Do you circulate your catalogues to them? What sort of catalogues do you send them? Can you give us a copy?



**A.** Here they are. (Copies of the catalogues were handed into the Committee by the witness.) We circulate these catalogues beforehand to the theatres.

**Q.** They select certain things out of these catalogues and ask you to supply them?

**A.** Generally all our films are run by them.

**Q.** Supposing they want only one?

**A.** I get, say, about 70 pictures, and if a man wants a particular film earlier, I can arrange to send it to him earlier. It is not possible for the exhibitor to get so many American films in India. There are only a dozen or more film makers in America who have a reputation while the Punjab exhibitors require about 140.

**Q.** How do you supply them the films?

**A.** Sometimes we hire them. But if we find that after supplying him with a film he is losing on it we reduce the rate. Sometimes we supply them with films on a percentage basis. We don't sell films.

**Q.** What is the ordinary charge?

**A.** That depends upon the status of the cinema and its situation. If a place is small, then we charge him less, but if it is a big centre like Lahore, we usually charge more, because we know they will earn more here than in a small place. Our rates vary with the place.

**Q.** You are the agent here and you supply films to all places in the Punjab?

**A.** Yes. I visit almost all cinemas.

**Q.** I suppose you know the Punjab and the Frontier well?

**A.** I have seen half of the U. P. The western side of U. P. is also under my jurisdiction.

**Q.** How many cinemas are there actually?

**A.** There are about sixty cinemas in my jurisdiction.

**Q.** Have you classified them for your purpose as 1st class, 2nd class and so on?

**A.** Yes. Suppose I have entered into a contract to hire out a film for say Rs. 100 and the man actually shows it in his place, if afterwards I am satisfied that he has lost money on it we make a reduction in the rates.

**Q.** How many theatres are there in the Punjab province?

**A.** About 60.

**Q.** How many of them are there in the Punjab?

**A.** There are 56 theatres.

**Q.** And you supply your pictures to all these 56 theatres?

**A.** Yes, except to Madans theatres.

**Q.** This excludes Madans? There are 56 theatres which you supply in the Punjab?

**A.** No, these include Madans.

**Q.** How many are Madans? Will you send us a list. Send us a complete list. Do you take any other films except those by your Universal Pictures Corporation?

**A.** Some Indian pictures also we distribute.

**Q.** But do you take any other foreign pictures?

**A.** That we cannot take direct. Our New York office sends us some. Now we have arranged to get the British Empire news from London too. That we distribute in India.

**Q.** Your company is undertaking an agency for the British Empire news-gazette?

**A.** Yes.

Q. And you say you are not able to supply all the theatres—the demand is greater than the supply?

A. Yes, in the Punjab it is.

Q. You are not able to cope with the demand?

A. Because in the cantonment cinema proprietors change 3 programmes a week. They will require 150 programmes in the year and my company only makes 75 programmes.

Q. There is room for more films being shown, even in the theatres as they are?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you think the cinema theatres will multiply in number? How many years' experience have you got?

A. 8 years.

Q. The theatres are growing in number? New theatres are coming into existence?

A. Some new theatres are coming into existence. Some old theatres are closing down.

Q. How many old theatres have closed down?

A. Or they have changed hands.

Q. I don't care about changed hands. But have any theatres closed down to your knowledge?

A. That very theatre has been reopened by another party.

Q. That is no good. During your 8 years is there any theatre that was closed--it does not matter if the ownership changes hands--but has any theatre been absolutely closed for want of patronage?

A. No.

Q. On the other hand, new theatres have come into existence?

A. Yes.

Q. Can you tell us how many there were when you took up the agency and how many there are to-day?

A. About 20 new cinemas have come into existence since I took up charge of this Branch (office).

Q. And Madams have also increased the number of their theatres here?

A. They have increased the association. Only they have taken one cinema at Rawalpindi--they have purchased their own. Otherwise they have taken more theatres in association in this circuit.

Q. Do they come within the 20 you mentioned?

A. Yes. When I took over charge Madams had theatres at Lahore and Simla only--no other theatres in the Punjab.

Q. Your income in your agency is steadily growing from year to year?

A. Yes.

Q. That is, on the percentage basis or the rental basis you are getting more and more?

A. Yes.

Q. So the cinema is getting popular with the people?

A. Yes.

Q. And Indian films are being shown in larger numbers than they used to be?

A. Yes, Indian pictures are more popular here too. But they are only shown in the cities, not in the cantonments. But the income on Indian pictures is much more than on western films. Now, "Shirin Farhad" was shown for three nights although about four months back it had already been shown for a complete week. The three days income was Rs. 1,200. Rs. 400 a day on an average. The first night it was Rs. 393, the second night Rs. 329, and the last night Rs. 471.

**Q.** And this was the second show of the same film in Lahore. Has any western film had such an experience?

**A.** Even big western films are run twice sometimes; but they must be very good films.

**Q.** Do you go to the theatres often?

**A.** I have to, because I have to report which pictures are appreciated.

**Q.** I suppose you want to feel the pulse of the people—what is popular and what is not?—you must be quite an expert at that.

**A.** I have to see what sort of films appeal to the public.

**Q.** What sort of films appeal to the illiterate classes?

**A.** The illiterate classes want fighting scenes.

**Q.** Boxing?

**A.** Not actual boxing. Fighting scenes or historical pictures.

**Q.** Are you talking of Indian films or western films?

**A.** Both.

**Q.** Do you think they follow western historical films?

**A.** Yes. Even for these films, if there is fighting or the opening of the sea, as in "The Ten Commandments," etc.

**Q.** You mean they want natural scenery—big actions—that sort of life? Do you think illiterate people are attracted to these passionate love-making scenes?

**A.** No, if there are love scenes only very few illiterate people go.

**Q.** If there is merely western social drama it is not popular with Indians here?

**A.** No, not only here but anywhere.

**Q.** I mean in the Punjab. Have you travelled outside Lahore?

**A.** I have seen almost all the cinemas three or four times. I go on tour and see how things are going on.

**Q.** You do go outside Lahore also and see various cinemas in your jurisdiction, and the general impression you gather is that the illiterate masses don't care for these western social dramas?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Now, do you see many educated people, specially college students, go to the cinema.

**A.** College students are the backbone of the cinemas in Lahore. In the summer they are losing because the colleges are closed.

**Q.** What sort of films do they fancy?

**A.** Well, for instance there are Victor Hugo's novels. If a picture is made from one of his novels people will come and see it—anything that is based on a novel they have read. "Rupert of Hentzau," for instance, was very popular. Any film based on English popular historical literature they like. Certain stars too are very popular. A Charlie Chaplin picture might be bad but even if it is shown six times the theatres will be overcrowded.

**Q.** Even college students?

**A.** Yes. Or Douglas Fairbanks, as many times as you show his film the theatre will be crowded.

**Q.** Do they like these passionate love-making scenes?

**A.** I do not think they like it. But in any film there is very little passionate love-making. It comes on the screen for a second.

**Q.** You are a frequenter of the cinema—don't you see a lot of love-making on the screen?

**A.** In every story there will be ordinary love-making.

**Q.** But I know some places where there is long patient kissing.

A. I have never seen any such film. It remains only for a second and it is closed up.

Q. You are a young man your-self, I take it, you like to see such things?

A. Unless there is some love-making in the picture it won't be appreciated.

Q. You mean it won't be popular with the people?

A. Even in Indian pictures there are dancing scenes. Unless there is a dancing scene it won't be popular.

Q. There is a tendency even in Indian pictures to introduce some such things, but not to the same extent. Are you satisfied—being in the trade perhaps you are an interested party but I want you, as an Indian, to think about it—are you satisfied that the cinema has no demoralising effect upon the people of the country?

A. I do not think so.

Q. I mean you see we have got our brothers and our sisters.

A. There might be some films about love-making that the children may not like to see but there is no demoralising effect on the general public.

Q. Youths are not led away by seeing such scenes to want to practise it among themselves—that sort of idea is not created? Because some elders have told us that it has that effect.

A. Those who told you that have never visited the cinema. They gather these things from outside. Because the old men are always after the young men.

Q. You mean they want to find fault with the young men?

A. Because old men, professors, pleaders and barristers, they never go to the cinema at all, unless on a complimentary ticket.

Q. You mean old people are always finding fault with the youths in that way?

A. Yes.

Q. Well, supposing the duty on imported films is increased in order to encourage the growth of the Indian film in this country, how would you like it?

A. I don't think it will help an exhibitor because the film distributors will raise their prices, which will affect the exhibitors.

Q. Do you think, from your experience, it will have a serious effect on the trade if we increased the import duty on foreign films a little and reduced the import duty on raw articles?

A. That will be quite good.

Q. You approve of the latter, not of the first?

A. Yes.

Q. Now, I don't suppose you have dealt in British films.

A. I have seen British films too, in Lahore. "Zeebrugge" was a great success.

Q. That was not a social drama. Have you seen a social drama?

A. Even the American social drama won't be a success. Now "The Flag Lieutenant" which is being exhibited in Calcutta is a very big success. It is a British picture.

Q. You have not seen it here?

A. No, but I have read the notices.

Mr. Neogy : Since when have you been connected with the Universal?

A. Since 1921.

Q. Has the number of pictures that your firm has sent out increased during this period, year after year?

A. Yes, because in 1920 we used to make 36 pictures. Now they make 75.

Q. So the number is going on increasing—36 to 75 during these six years. Now, you say you report to headquarters every week about the requirements?

A. About what pictures are appreciated in the Punjab and which picture is good and the defect in the films and everything. How many new cinemas are opened, which cinema is closed and the reasons why it is closed.

Q. Have you reason to believe that your reports carry weight with your principles there?

A. Certainly. Reports from all the offices go to Bombay and they send them on to New York.

Q. And do you think that your reports influence the making of pictures?

A. To some extent, because they ask for such reports.

Q. Do you receive complaints from the public about any objectionable picture or anything of the kind?

A. I have not received any.

Q. Do you follow the criticisms that appear in the press?

A. These press people don't give their independent criticism. Of course the Civil and Military Gazette write their independent opinion. But the Indian press will write a long review about a film which might be bad—and before it is exhibited. The day before yesterday I saw a notice about "Maciste in the Lion's Cage" which is given in advance. The cinema manager writes a review, twenty or thirty lines, the assistant editor signs it and it goes inside. If you don't give them the passes to the theatre, they won't give the review.

Q. Now, you have seen the complaint that western civilization is misrepresented on the screen? You have seen such observations in the press and elsewhere? Have you reported that to your head office? When was your last report made on the subject?

A. That was about 18 months back.

Q. Do you generally send the cuttings of such newspaper reports?

A. I send them every week.

Q. You said you had also undertaken the distribution of Indian pictures. Whose pictures?

A. Now I have got the films. "Shirin Farhad," and "Vikrain Charitia" from the Kohinoor Film Company, the...

Q. You deal with different producers?

A. These films are taken by my office in Bombay and they send them to me. I can't take anything direct.

Q. Now, you have said that there are about 56 theatres in the Punjab, including Delhi. In how many theatres out of this number are Indian pictures shown at all?

A. In all city theatres—leaving out the cantonments, all cities run Indian pictures.

Q. Everywhere?

A. Yes. Rawalpindi, Peshawar, Sialkot, Amritsar, Lahore. In Lahore Indian pictures run twice. The Star Cinema, Lahore took Rs. 2,000 in one week with one picture—my "Passion." Wherever Indian pictures are shown, they prove a success from the financial point of view. I am not talking of Lahore city alone. Some social dramas which are popular in Bombay won't be popular here, but historical pictures are very popular.

Q. What procedure do you adopt to find out whether a particular picture that is popular in Bombay will be popular in the Punjab?

A. From my knowledge. I get the booklet, and I can at once see whether this picture will be popular in this province.

**Q.** You don't see the picture?

**A.** No, as it is not possible for me to go to Bombay often. I see them when they are exhibited here.

**Colonel Crawford :** Is your company undertaking the distribution of Indian films or considering such an undertaking?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** You are actually taking on the distribution of Indian films?

**A.** Yes. Negotiations are going on.

**Q.** Now, as regards these old gentlemen who from your general description appear to be spoil-sports, how is it they get this impression that the cinema has a demoralising effect?

**A.** Because there may be a son who may not obey his father and he may get angry. And two or three old people will get together and say this is having a bad effect on the boys.

**Q.** You don't think by any chance they get it from the posters?

**A.** No.

**Written Statement of Mr. ABDUL QAYUM MALIK, Bar-at-Law,  
Gujranwala, dated the 11th November 1927.**

**INTRODUCTORY.**

1. I possess some knowledge of the Cinematograph Industry in England and in India. I received amateur instructions in taking films with Messrs. L. G. Egrot & Co., Cinematographers, 2B, Streatham Place, London, S.E., and took a film of my travels in Turkey, Syria and Egypt for educational purposes. I saw my travel film through the film manufacturing firm, the Kohinoor Film Company, Bombay. I also studied details of film-taking and film-developing in the Gaumont Film Studios in London and Paris. I have made a special study of most of the available literature on film industry by reading the 'Bioscope', the 'Pictures', and other periodicals published on the subject in England and America.

I do not claim to be an expert in the technique of film-making, but I can lay some claim to a comprehensive knowledge of the various branches of this modern industry. I was a frequent cinema-goer in England, France, Germany, Turkey and Egypt and have seen most of the Comics, Photo-plays, and War-films during my eight years' stay abroad. I did not miss a single opportunity of seeing Educational, Travelogue, or big Game-hunting films in England and France. I am familiar with some aspects of the film industry in India, and have witnessed the taking of certain classical dramas in Bombay. I have myself occasionally given Lantern and Film Lectures in England. I know a few things about the value of films as a means to commercial and co-operative propaganda, and have assisted at the showing of Sale and Co-operative Credit Societies' Films in France and the Punjab respectively. I have also taken part in Health-lectures given at Constantinople and Lausanne (Switzerland) demonstrated by the films of the International Red Cross.

**GENERAL.**

2. (a) (1) Generally speaking, Indians of the educated classes do not constitute more than 10 per cent. of cinema-goers. Educated classes of Bombay and Calcutta may be exceptions to the rule. The number of Indians of the really cultured class is fewer still.

(2) The bulk of cinema-goers belong to the illiterate classes both in large cities and smaller towns of India. Even cinemas in Lahore, Delhi, Lucknow, Allahabad and Agra are not frequented by educated classes. The number of students is, however, on the increase but even they do not

constitute the majority. I have included in illiterate classes petty traders, shop-keepers, and workmen who otherwise may be able to read and write in the vernacular. My answers refer to the Eastern, Northern, and North-Western part of India.

(b) Educated classes 20 to 30 per cent. Others illiterates.

(c) Their number is negligible. They are mostly accompanied by their friends or parents. If it is a special show for school-children, by their teachers. The number of adolescents of impressionable age is not large. The majority are the grown-ups.

#### PART I.

3. Adventure films, rough-love, and wild-west films with a lot of riding thrown in; also films of Indian wrestling bouts, religious celebrations, and those of National mournings and rejoicings. Even illiterates flock to see the latter class of films. Indian classical dramas are also popular.

4. Comparatively speaking, Indian film-caterers themselves belong to the illiterate class. They have an eye to the box, and there their interest ends. Most of them are ignorant of the rudiments of the industry. They are catering as well as they can to the class of patrons they have. The point is that cinema sense in India is in the making, and any definite consideration as to the supply and demand of the right sort of films is, to my mind, premature.

5. Only to some extent.

(a) No.

(b) Yes, if they depict scenes and modes of life which the patrons can follow, e.g., a film of Burman life, or South-Indian life will not be appreciated in the Punjab.

(c) Western, more particularly American films are more profitable. No Indian film has yet been released to create a really country-wide popular stir. In Bombay "Manjari" and "Sati-Narmala" have had a good reception, but they are essentially Gujrati films and are unknown in the North.

6. (a) Yes. But the few ill-equipped Indian studios have not the resources, nor are there actors and actresses educated and intelligent enough to make them go to the heart of the cinema-goers. Films of Indian scenes and well known episodes of Indian Mythology, if well produced, should be well-received.

(b) (1) Educated classes would like all kinds of films, but they are very critical and would feel bored if the films are badly produced.

(2) If the films depict Mythology, History and scenes of the sect of religion to which they belong.

7. Yes. No good films depicting honour, independence, virtue and self-respect among Indians are available, and whatever there are, these could not be easily followed by the British soldiers in India. Indian troops would like all these films appreciated by illiterate classes. They would also like films of military life, wild-west films, and films of daring and bravery spiced with "cherché la femme".

8. (a) No.

(b) My reasons would take a large amount of writing to explain. My general opinion however is that no artificial method in the form of State action could remove these defects. Time is the only remedy. In the ultimate reckoning the verdict of cinema-goers is the only test of the value and popularity of a film, as it is throughout the world. I cannot for a moment suggest that private enterprise should be encouraged to look to the Government for means to improve the quality, or to increase the quantity of productions. Film-producing is a business proposition pure and simple, and the businessman himself should provide the means. I make exception in the case of education films, which could be prepared under the supervision of Government officials for use in schools. The main diffi-

culties which hamper the development of the film-industry in India are the following:—

- (1) The industry has not yet found its legs. The reason is, that the majority of the public who patronize cinemas are not educated and critical enough to call for really high class films, and the few second rate films that are released by Indian studios pass muster. The Indian cinema exhibitor is not an intelligent individual keen on competition, and is destitute of initiative. He is satisfied with small but quick return on his investment. Moreover, the cinema trade has not yet come to be recognised as a national industry involving considerations of improvement not only from business but from patriotic point of view as well. I am diffident that Indian films could ever eclipse high class foreign films which are the result of superior business acumen combined with expert scientific skill.
  - (2) Another draw-back of the Indian films is that the scenario writers are men of little education and less imagination. In preparing a plot their vision is delimited by exclusively local traditions, local customs and local colour. They seem to be inherently incapable of investing their ideas with country-wide interest.
  - (3) There is no expert advertising agency behind Indian films, for the obvious reason that owing to conditions of general ignorance advertising expenses are considered as so much waste. The majority of cinema-goers do not go to see a picture upon which they have set their heart, but just any picture, Indian, British or American.
  - (4) There are good Indian actors of the spoken play, for Indian drama is as old as Indian History, but there is not a single cinema artist in India whose work would rank with even a third rate cinema actor of any European country.
  - (5) Hindu classical films excite some interest and therefore may be successful business propositions, but no Mussalman would like the attempt to depict an episode of Muslim religious history, although such a film would possess universal appeal.
- I must add that these features of the Indian film industry depend for their improvement on the rise in the standard of cinema-goers', scenario writers', film-producers', and film exhibitors' intelligence.

#### *Tax and Tariff.*

9. Good films are readily obtainable by good exhibitors at reasonable prices.

The output of Indian studios is not large, therefore those who are nearest the producers are first served.

10. Not to my knowledge.

11. Very few exhibitors care to preview films. They just want so many reels of pictures that would show on the screen.

12. I am against taxing amusements in India. It would handicap a budding trade. Even in England the amusement tax was unknown before the War.

13. In the present state of the industry I do not think protective tariff on imported films will improve the quality of Indian films. It may to some extent increase their quantity. I would certainly suggest low tariff on materials.

14. It would to some extent. At present there is no great demand.

15. No. Dearth of equipment in artists and property and incapacity to utilize them.



*Government Action.*

16. There are none. You can manufacture films and cameras, but you cannot create actors, producers, etc.

17. There are people who are willing to put their money in a new enterprise.

18. Slightly increased tariff on imported films and subsidy to Indian manufacturers of materials.

19. Infinitesimal when compared with the cost in European countries.

20. (a) and (b) Yes. Tax on imported materials may be utilized in subsidising manufacture of materials in India.

21. State control of a budding industry will paralyse local initiative and may even kill it outright. The Government may control educational and propaganda films. I suggest manufacture, not management, as State monopoly. By this suggestion I want to save the Government from popular resentment.

*British Commonwealth Films.*

22. Yes. Provided only films manufactured in India are utilized for this purpose.

(a), (b) and (c) If the right sort of Indian films are exhibited abroad. I should strongly suggest the Government to guard against the suspicion of appearing to give a fillip to Imperial films not manufactured in India.

23. (a) To a very large extent.

(b) Reciprocal exchange of films made in India and other parts on a footing of parity in values, moral, and material.

## PART II.

*Social Aspects and Control.*

24. (a) Immoral films. But I have not come across any.

(b) None.

(c) Immoral films are harmful to all and in every way, but none are in circulation.

(d) (1) and (2) It is quite adequate in this respect but it is not adequate in respect of films which show Eastern habits, manners and customs in an unfavourable light.

(e) None whatsoever.

(f) For example scenes of Chinese, Arab, Moorish, and Indian life in foreign films, made primarily for Western patrons, always depict them as dirty, truculent, cruel, and dishonest peoples.

25. Undoubtedly.

26. (a) No film containing even a suggestion deprecating religion should be allowed.

(b) I forget the title but a film depicting the Life of the Prophet shown in a Karachi Cinema some years ago led to a grave popular discontent, inasmuch as a part of the cinema was destroyed by fire and the showing of the film was stopped.

*Misrepresentation of West.*

27. (a) No undesirable results follow, because all Western films have a moral at the end.

(b) Yes, most of them, e.g., "Naulakha" which had a long run at the London Opera House Cinema. Such films are not produced in India.

28. None.

29. Indian film censorship being already so rigid, no undesirable films are permitted to be shown.

30. Very few children go to the cinema, therefore there is no reason for special measures.

31. (a) Yes. Question against 31 (b) not given.

32. Yes.

*Censorship.*

33. (a) Yes. I am for relaxing it somewhat.

(b) Yes.

(c) Yes.

34. (a) I would suggest Provincial Boards only.

(4) (d) Out of the Income-tax of Provincial exhibitors.

35. (b) I would prefer this arrangement, but the decision of the Advisory Board should be made effective.

*Present System.*

36. (a) I should prefer the arrangement as in 35 (b). The Censor should be a man of good education and culture.

(b) Yes.

37. (a) Provincial Boards will provide the safeguard.

(b) Not necessarily.

38. None to my knowledge.

39. None to my knowledge.

*Control over Trade.*

40. Offensive posters are rarely used through fear of loss of patronage and Police action. None.

41. Yes. The number of films depicting daring and noble deeds is on the increase.

42. The Trade should not be given any part in censoring films.

43. (a) At present no.

44. Representatives of Public Bodies and the Press may sit on the Board of Provincial Film Censors.

45. (a) No.

(b) No.

**Oral Evidence of Mr. ABDUL QAYUM MALIK, Bar-at-Law,  
Gujranwala, on Saturday, the 26th November 1927.**

*Chairman:* I am much obliged to you for coming all the way from Gujranwala. I see you have made a special study of the subject. How is it, having made all this study, you have not put your heart into this industry?

A. Well, I didn't like to take it up professionally. It is merely a side interest.

*Q.* But with what object did you study the conditions?

A. Not particularly. Since I stayed in England very long, 7 or 8 years, I had several opportunities of coming across people who are connected with this industry and, of course being a lecturer myself in the London University, I was able to come across travelling lecturers who used films and slides.

*Q.* Did you yourself study any technical matters connected with the industry?

A. No. I have said that I do not claim to be an expert in the technique of making films.

*Q.* Where have you travelled?

A. In England, Germany, France, Italy, Servia, Bulgaria, Turkey, Egypt, Palestine and so on.

Q. Do they produce films in these countries? In Turkey and Egypt too?

A. Oh, yes.

Q. Do you know what they do in Germany to produce educational films? What is the part Government takes in it?

A. I am not sure, Sir, about that part of the question but I think that the schools probably have some sort of arrangement with the producers. The studio owners let them make educational films in their studio.

Q. Any way you are not sure, don't bother. We should like to have accurate information.

A. Generally speaking, the German films regarding education are outdoor scenes and they are prepared by experts connected with the Technical Department of the Universities.

Q. Now, I see from your statement that you have not got much faith in the future of the Indian industry.

A. I am afraid not, for the simple reason that we are living in an age of competition, very keen competition, in regard to modern industries and more especially for the reason that there are not enough actors or artists to produce your films. On the other hand, we have in Europe and America people who have made a life-long study of it.

Q. But after all this growth is only a matter of ten years or so? Why shouldn't India put forth her efforts?

A. I suppose they will be able to do something in the future.

Q. The modern growth of the cinema industry has taken place in ten years—though it began 20 or 30 years ago, the marvellous growth is quite recent—Los Angeles itself began to grow into a city in the last 15 years.

A. Yes.

Q. Now why do you think India should not put forth her efforts? I am rather disappointed at your pessimism.

A. I do not mean that India should not make an effort. But in comparison with the films that are produced abroad, Indian films have a poor value. In the future of course improvements could be effected.

Q. In fact they are showing good signs of improvement in Bombay already.

A. To some extent, yes. Though I feel that on the screen some of the best films produced by the Kohinoor Company and some Calcutta studios seem to be very dull and flat. Probably it may be due to the fact that it is in the initial stage. Later on they might develop it. But as things are, it is not very hopeful.

Q. I mean, if sons of India like you, who take an interest in these things, give a cold shoulder to it, it is bound to go from bad to worse. Why don't you attempt to start the industry yourself? You have ideas about it?

A. Well, there are difficulties, more particularly with regard to the insufficiency of artists and technical experts.

Q. But do you know that in "Sacrifice", which was produced in Bombay, most of them were amateurs? One of them was a Parsi graduate and they have done remarkably well.

A. I believe most of them must be students or educated artists.

Q. One was a schoolmaster—the man who took the part of the priest, his acting is splendid. It is the first time he appeared on the screen. I mean, you rather put a depreciatory value upon our people. If people were employed they would take to it.

A. I was considering the matter generally. A few particular instances here and there might be useful, but we have got to look at the whole industry as such.

**Q.** I am inclined to think that your views are too pessimistic with regard to the possibilities of growth before the industry in India.

**A.** Well, the industry will grow, and there is nothing to prevent it.

**Q.** You want an effort of the people? I mean, you consider it essential that the industry should develop in this country?

**A.** Oh, I think it would.

**Q.** I dare say you have read of the evidence that Indian films are becoming more and more popular? However crude they may be, they draw much more than western productions.

**A.** Certainly, because of the atmosphere and dress and all that.

**Q.** And don't you think therefore that at an early stage the enthusiasm for Indian films should be taken hold of and good guidance given to the industry?

**A.** Yes, I think it is very good.

**Q.** Now, what do you suggest should be done? Of course, you realise the difficulties. I see you are appalled by the difficulties before you as many of us are. Now think out and tell us what can be done to help the industry.

**A.** I am totally against any Government action to help the industry.

**Q.** Even against increasing the import duty on foreign films?

**A.** Well, I don't think that would really help the production of Indian films.

**Q.** Very well, reduce the duty on raw products?

**A.** That would help to some extent.

**Q.** Now, the quota system as they have adopted it in England?

**A.** It might help.

**Q.** Create a gradual taste for Indian films and give an impetus to the industry?

**A.** It would merely give an impetus, that is all.

**Q.** That is all that is wanted. Once it is on its legs it will take care of itself. It does give some ground for thinking that in the future it might develop.

People have been telling us that the film industry is not so important as other industries.

**A.** No. I think it is very important.

**Q.** In a country like India where illiteracy prevails and knowledge of the other parts of the country and of the world is wanting, the film is a very useful factor in removing that ignorance?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Do you think it should be considered superior to the other minor industries in the country—I won't class it along with steel or the mill industry,—but among the minor industries would not the film industry take a good place if you gave an order of preference?

**A.** I would not say that, but as a means of promoting education and instruction both of the young and of the grown up people who cannot read and write the film could be used to advantage. It would be a very good weapon to eradicate ignorance. I should not like to put it on a par with other industries like cotton, steel and so on.

**Q.** It is not productive of wealth, but it is productive of a wealth of knowledge?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** And growth of knowledge in the people means more production?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** And an educated man is a more effective citizen than an uneducated man?

A. Yes.

Q. In that way it would be a national asset?

A. Yes.

Q. Some people seem to deprecate the value of this industry. What do you think?

A. It would increase the knowledge of the people.

Q. Then it is not a negligible factor?

A. No. It is a thing which has come to stay. Even from the business point of view it is a very good proposition. I am not at all suggesting that Government should help the exploitation of films for showing in cinemas for the public. I am particularly referring to educational films shown in schools and colleges. It should be considered as much a part of the Government's duty as the production of literature connected with public instruction and so on. That is only with regard to educational films.

Q. Of course, the two must go hand in hand. You cannot have merely educational films in the country?

A. To some extent.

Q. But this is the only form of amusement for the poor people?

A. Yes.

Q. And therefore in that way also it is a national concern to give a healthy amusement, is it not?

A. Yes. But so far as Government funds and Government help are concerned, I would confine my answer to education.

Q. You have travelled much. Do you think Indian films will have a market outside the country?

A. Not unless we are able to produce very good films, and we should also be able to produce not only films of Indian conditions but those of western conditions as well.

Q. Then only can you command a market outside India? You may have perfect technique, but you would not be able to interest European or American audiences with Indian subjects unless you deal with subjects that they are familiar with?

A. Not necessarily so.

Q. Once in a way they may patronise an Indian subject, but—

A. For instance, classical and religious dramas like "The Ten Commandments,"—they have been produced in Europe or America. Of course, they were quite popular although the subject was purely classical and had nothing to do with modern conditions. If the film is very well produced, and is up to the standard that the European experts have set up—if the Indian films could come up to that standard, then perhaps they may interest western cinema-goers.

Q. The taste of the people will be more for their own surroundings, will it not?

A. No. They would even take an interest in a foreign film if they can understand the plot.

Q. I do not deny that, they will take interest occasionally.

A. Yes. But the Indian studios are not in a position at this stage to produce a large amount of films to be shown abroad.

Q. You do not think any undesirable results would follow from the cinema?

A. I think none at all. An impression prevails that the cinema is a demoralising factor. I suppose to some extent it would be so if the film were a demoralising one. But taking into consideration the fact that the films are strictly censored, I do not think that they are really demoralising to the extent they are generally considered to be. Of course, one might object to bare arms, short skirts and so on, but they are details. So far as these

details go, you might say they are a little demoralising, but the result is good, because every western film has a good moral at the end.

*Q.* You can call them demoralising to the same extent as, for instance, some of the dramatic troupes?

*A.* Probably they are more.

*Q.* Operas, revues and so on?

*A.* Of course, there are other influences in social life which are equally demoralising and you cannot cut them out altogether. I do not suppose any demoralising effect has arisen. If people see exploits and daring feats it creates a good impression.

*Q.* They see how bold one should be and all that. It is well in that way?

*A.* It would produce that sort of result rather than the other.

*Q.* What is this you say about "Naulakha"?

*A.* It is the name of the railway station of Lahore, and probably they took up that title in order to show that it deals with oriental life and oriental scenes.

*Mr. Neogy:* Where was it produced?

*A.* It was produced in England.

*Chairman:* What was the objection there?

*A.* I think some of the Indian characters there were drawn from a class of people who had poverty, wretchedness and so on.

*Q.* It was produced in England and exhibited in England and you saw it?

*A.* The Indian characters that were shown there were from poor people, wretched, ignorant, filthy and that sort of thing. I do not suppose it was done with the purpose of misrepresenting Indians, probably just to create an interest.

*Q.* Some sort of fancy for a strange thing?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Any way it was objectionable, you did not like it?

*A.* It appeared to me that a large number of people over there who had no complete knowledge of conditions here might go away with the idea that the whole country was like that.

*Q.* It conveyed a wrong impression about India?

*A.* I do not say it did, but it would convey, it had a tendency to convey that impression.

*Q.* Do you know whether any Englishman or European who had been in India had any hand in it?

*A.* I am afraid I cannot say that.

*Q.* Because from the cast of the characters and all that, did it show any knowledge of the country at all?

*A.* I do not suppose that any English gentleman who had been out here was connected with it, but I think it was not a very faithful representation of this country.

*Q.* You think the Indian censorship is very rigid as it is?

*A.* Yes. I am for relaxing it. It is much too rigid.

*Q.* You are a travelled gentleman and a gentleman of culture and education and you care as much to guard against any demoralising effect as anybody else. I want to present this aspect of the question before you. Some of us are misled by the attitude taken by some of the Anglo-Indian press that it lowers the policemen and the white men in this country and that has created a prejudice against this in the country. What I want to guard myself against is this. Merely on account of this prejudice you should not lose sight of the fact if it really has got a dangerous effect on our countrymen. I want you, as a gentleman holding a responsible position in life, to tell us whether there is anything in the films now shown which calls for drastic action.

A. Considering the fact that they are well censored I do not suppose any such results follow or any special action is called for.

Q. On the whole you do not think the cinema has got a deleterious effect?

A. I have already spoken about bare arms and all that, otherwise the illiterate people are not very much affected.

*Colonel Crawford:* I have only one question to ask you. I understand you had been for about 8 years abroad and have seen a good deal of the cinemas in foreign countries. Would you compare the standard and type of the film which was shown in those countries with the standard and type of the film that you see in this country?

A. They are probably the same. In fact, I can say from the titles, although they are shown here some 2 years after they had been shown in England.

Q. Your only point is that they are old when they come here?

A. Yes. Of course, they are practically used up when they come out here.

Q. As regards the story and the general production of the film you do not think there is very much difference?

A. No. In fact it is the same.

Q. I am thinking of the mass of films that come out here. Are they equal to the standard and type of the films shown in England?

A. Most of the popular films that have really created a stir in Europe do come out here.

Q. The big films do come over here. But what about the second rate films? You are not shown here in Lahore big films every day of the week?

A. No.

Q. The programmes consist of the ordinary standard films?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you think it is the same as it is shown in England?

A. I do not know. I suppose they are more or less the same. I think they are about the same because those that are shown here had been in some way or other shown in England. They are never merely made for the Indian market. They are imported second hand material.

*Mr. Green:* You want Government to leave the industry alone subject to one exception, that is to say, the educational films?

A. Yes.

Q. Have you given any thought as to how those educational films are to be actually produced, whether it should be by a Government agency or the Government working through a company?

A. If Government could create a separate department with technical experts and so on, that would be all right. Otherwise Government can do it by contract. They can follow the same process as in respect of text books for schools.

Q. You do not mind how it is done?

A. It all depends. Those who have got something to do with finance might probably be able to speak much more effectively on this subject than myself.

*Mr. Neogy:* I have only one question. You have been to Egypt and Turkey and you say they have a small producing industry?

A. Yes.

Q. I see from a statement that in Egypt of the pictures shown 55 per cent. are American and 30 per cent. French, and in Turkey, 50 per cent. are American and 30 per cent. French. Are you aware of any steps which the Governments of those countries may have taken to encourage the production and exhibition of their indigenous films in their own countries?

A. The films that I have seen more particularly in Turkey have been produced by the War Department. Of course they were produced entirely by Government agency. They were War films. There is also a studio in Constantinople which produces films of rural life, how agriculture is improved, how cotton is produced and so on. The Government have undertaken the production of these films entirely on their own, to be shown at schools and before rural communities.

Q. What about entertainment films?

A. They are entirely imported.

Q. What about Egypt?

A. They are now showing films relating to the finds of Tutankhamen and so on.

Q. More or less propaganda films?

A. Yes, as well as educational films.

Q. Not so much of entertainment films?

A. They are entirely imported, with the exception of one in Turkey which was probably connected with a sensational criminal case. That was made into a film with the permission of the Government and that was shown purely as an entertainment film.

Q. Was it shown in schools?

A. Probably not.

### **Written Statement of Mr. OWEN ROBERTS, M.L.C., dated the 4th November 1927.**

I have been into the questionnaire sent me by the Punjab Government and feel it incumbent upon me to make certain observations on the class of pictures not infrequently shown in Lahore Cinema Halls.

I had some correspondence with Government on this subject in 1925 and in consequence of that correspondence notices were posted up in the various Cinema Halls but, so far as I am at present aware, these notices are no longer being shown in a general way.

I illustrated my case at the time by drawing attention to a film which was shown in Lahore called "The Wages of Sin" which I understand had to be withdrawn and subsequently, in consequence of the generally unsatisfactory character of the pictures that were being shown, I asked a question in the Punjab Legislative Council in the session that took place in Simla in 1925. I obtained no satisfaction from the question and that evening curiosity took me to the Cinematograph in Simla where to my astonishment they were showing "The Wages of Sin". The following Saturday I visited the Cinema as the guest of a well known Military Officer and his wife and there were present at that performance, occupying chairs immediately in front of us, two or three of the most distinguished Officers of the Government of India and all these people were unanimous in their condemnation of the picture that was being shown called "The Sheik". The picture was replete with bad taste and wrong information and should never have been passed for this country.

From time to time these pictures do crop up and there is no remedy open to the public that I know of.

In addition to a general censorship I am convinced that there ought to be a Provincial right to exclude a picture. I am confident there is absolutely no excuse for the display of pictures of an objectionable class because a visit to any Cinematograph show will prove that the Indian audience is quite capable of appreciating and responding to pictures of the better class. Even when one leaves pictures of the best class and gets down to those in which Rudolph Valentino acts, there is immense enthusiasm and pictures of that type, so long as they are not objectionable, and I can



definitely recall crowded houses and enthusiastic appreciation on really good pictures.

The remedy would appear to me to lie in the annual licensing of picture houses as such. There is no doubt that there is a monopoly of this business; the Madan Theatres have taken up, here in Lahore, no less than three large houses within 50 yards of one another, two being on one side of the road and the other on the opposite side. One of these they have had to close down as a Picture House but they are in the satisfactory position of being able to prevent anybody else from renting it. Outside this group there is one picture house which evidently represents another interest and a very struggling existence it has had. I am glad to be able to say that it is now commencing to hold its own and it shows a very good class of picture. Control through annual licensing will have a very healthy effect and I regard it as all the more necessary since liquor licenses are attached to each Cinema and I had occasion to draw attention to the distinct abuse of these licenses.

On the subject of Indian produced films my experience is very limited. Those that I have seen have been of the very crudest and they do not appear to arouse any particular enthusiasm. As regards their good taste, this is a matter that must be left to individual opinion but judging from our standpoint I need hardly say that an instance in one of these films where a woman proceeded to give birth to a child "in coram publico" would have been sufficient to debar it anywhere.

The matter is one of great importance as the development of cinema theatres along proper lines may do a great deal of good.

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**Oral Evidence of Mr. OWEN ROBERTS, M.L.C., Vice-President of the Lahore Municipal Committee, on Saturday, the 26th November 1927.**

*Chairman:* You occupy a representative position? You represent the European community in the Local Council?

A. Yes.

Q. You are the Chairman of the Municipality here?

A. No. I am the Senior Vice-President of it.

Q. How many years have you been in Lahore?

A. For about 17 years or more.

Q. When did the cinema come into existence here?

A. It was very crude when I first came here. We had only one here.

Q. That was in the cantonment?

A. No. It belonged to Madans.

Q. Madans have got only two theatres now here.

A. They owned three. They have closed one down.

Q. I think you are mistaken in your statement that they are in a satisfactory position of being able to prevent anybody else from renting it. We have just heard it has been rented . . .

A. Two of them are being run by Madans and the third is being used as a dance hall. . .

Q. The one which has been dropped has been taken up by some one else who appeared before us.

A. Not as cinema. It is still used as a dance hall.

Q. By whom?

A. It may be somebody else. I do not know. But it has never been opened as a cinema. By renting out I mean renting out as a cinema.

*Q.* You say here, "the remedy would appear to me to lie in the annual licensing of picture houses as such". Two out of 7 are controlled by one agency. You do not consider it a monopoly?

*A.* There were three actually going. I believe there may be some permanent cinemas in the city, but I have more or less an impression that the cinemas there are of a temporary character. The three I mention are working quite close together.

*Q.* I think you are thinking of cinemas in a particular locality in that respect?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* That is, more or less for European audiences?

*A.* The percentage of Europeans is extremely small.

*Q.* Even two out of 6 cannot be said to be a monopoly. We are told that the other cinemas also are doing well and that they are permanent things—we have heard this this morning from the exhibitors themselves.

*A.* I should think that these two that Madans own here are the two principal ones.

*Q.* Apparently everywhere they have captured the fashionable quarters.

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* What do you then suggest? Do you mean that you should withhold licenses to the same man?

*A.* Not necessarily so, but the provincial authority must have power to refuse a license to a man who produces an objectionable type of picture or who will not maintain a certain standard . . . .

*Mr. Green:* Every theatre has an annual license so as to ensure its fitness and safety and no film can be exhibited unless it has been censored beforehand.

*A.* Quite right, but I do not think the view of the Censorship Board is worth very much. A film may be objectionable in the Punjab and may not be so in another place . . . .

*Chairman:* In that case the local authority can suspend it.

*A.* That is the difficulty. Can they?

*Q.* They can suspend.

*A.* By the time you have got that step taken the 3 or 4 days' run is over and the mischief is done.

*Q.* Can you tell us what sort of mischief you are contemplating?

*A.* I have got all the letters here. In 1925 I wrote to the authorities in respect of certain pictures that were being shown and made certain representations to them. Shortly after that I saw a notice which exhibited in these halls, "Any person objecting to a picture should apply to the District Magistrate". I see that notice is not being exhibited now.

*Q.* Notice inviting objections?

*A.* Pointing out to whom to go and lodge objections.

*Q.* You want such a notice in every theatre?

*A.* I think it is the least that could be done. Otherwise very many people often do not know whom to appeal to.

*Q.* But not the class of people who are likely to object, they would know. You do not expect the ordinary cinema-goer to go about objecting to what he sees. It is only the man who takes an interest in the thing who is likely to object. They would belong to the educated classes ordinarily?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Would they find any difficulty in finding out to whom to appeal? We have heard the District Magistrate of this place say that he has heard several complaints and he has taken action on them.

*A.* I had considerable difficulty myself until I found out.

**Q.** People already complain that they have got too many authorities to deal with; in fact, complimentary passes have to be given to various people who deal with them, and that there is a lot of harassment already. They have got to deal with the Railway, the excise, the police, the licensing authorities, the electrical department—all these people to deal with, and they feel that they are being harassed, that is what the trade says. And if you add another condition like this, that if they do not exhibit a good standard of pictures the license will be cancelled although the films shown have been passed by a Censor Board, do you think such a condition is conducive to the development of the trade?

**A.** I think so. Anything that gives it a healthy tone is likely to improve it rather than throw it back.

**Q.** What happened to this film "The Wages of Sin"? Is it still being exhibited?

**A.** I do not know.

**Q.** Notwithstanding that most distinguished officers of the Government expressed their disapproval?

**A.** There was considerable newspaper correspondence about it.

**Q.** I dare say it must have been re-examined. I do not know if you are aware of that.

**A.** I know the papers were full of the thing. I saw a film about ten days ago in Lucknow. We had to leave the theatre. There were three of us in a party and we left the theatre.

**Q.** The others stuck to it.

**A.** Well, it was a thin house.

**Q.** What was the show?

**A.** "Dream Street".

**Q.** What was it that hurt you so much in that?

**A.** It was not a question of hurting so much. It was simply disgusting. There were Chinamen there messing about with girls and a white woman resents it and turns police informer and then is made to say that it will be a lesson to a Chinaman not to mess about with white women. I do not think it can do anybody any good, for the Indian or the European. It is offensive to both.

**Q.** I suppose you did not think it worth while to go complaining about this. You left it there?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** From your experience of one case you thought it was no use going on with this?

**A.** I was a stranger to the place. If it had been here I should have written about it.

**Q.** You have not seen any Indian film I suppose?

**A.** I have seen several.

**Q.** Do you think they are likely to appeal to European audiences?

**A.** The subjects are all right, but they are crude. The handling is absolutely crude.

**Q.** Are you for safeguarding Indian effort in that direction?

**A.** I do not think you can do much to increase it. It is a matter of time. I do not know how I can help it.

**Q.** Take, for instance, the quota system which has been adopted in England for British Empire films, which means more or less British films for the present. Can we adopt it here in this country?

**A.** I am afraid I do not know anything about the quota system.

**Q.** You have not followed it?

**A.** No.

*Q.* Then your opinion is, there must be a little stricter censorship?

*A.* And I would also insist upon a degree of provincial control.

*Q.* You know provincial action can be taken under the law as it is. The District Magistrate can suspend the showing of a film to which he takes exception—any District Magistrate in India.

*A.* But I would like that authority examined to see whether it ought not to be extended and whether the power should not be increased.

*Mr. Green:* We have examined it.

*A.* It is not merely the film. You are introducing a new thing. These cinemas all have to take licenses which I have seen them definitely abuse.

*Chairman:* You mean for the sale of liquor and so on.

*A.* I have seen them definitely abusing it. I have seen them on a summer's night using a cinema license to serve drinks to everybody on the roadside.

*Q.* That is a different aspect with which we are not concerned.

*A.* That is why I am for controlling the license of the theatre.

*Q.* I am afraid it is beyond our purview. It is not within our terms. We are concerned with the film and the film industry. I suppose you believe in educational films being produced?

*A.* Yes, they are quite good.

*Q.* I mean, to educate the people. That would be an effective method for educating the people, giving your ideas about methods of living, hygiene, etc.?

*A.* But I don't think you could produce them as a main subject.

*Q.* Only as appanages; make it obligatory upon each cinema to show a certain number of films of that character and also make them amusing in a way.

*A.* I would not make it obligatory. That is a difficult matter.

*Mr. Green:* Only one question. You stated that you saw an Indian film in which childbirth was actually shown on the screen. Can you by any chance remember the name of it?

*A.* I cannot. It was one of the very few shown here in Lahore.

*Q.* Comparatively recently?

*A.* In the last few years. I think I saw it in Mussoorie at a cinema there. It was shown, if you know Mussoorie at all, at the foot of the Landour Hill. It was very largely advertised.

*Q.* No public objection was taken to it?

*A.* Again I was not in my own province and I was not seriously concerned.

*Q.* I do not mean by you personally but any other person?

*A.* Not that I know of.

*Chairman:* Was it a public health film?

*A.* No, it was mythology.

*Q.* Where actual delivery was shown?

*A.* Not in detail, but a lady was laid down on a couch and they had to produce a child from her buttocks somehow or other. It was as crude as it could possibly be.

*Mr. Green:* Isn't it possible that from the point of view of the audience for which it was produced, it was as well known as certain Biblical scenes which possibly we would not actually like to see reproduced? At any rate I am glad to find it was not an ordinary social drama.

*Colonel Crawford:* I gather the point you made about "The Wages of Sin" was that it was definitely banned by the Punjab Government; and it managed to be shown again in the same province some four days later.

*A.* Some time later, yes.

*Q.* Showing there was some weakness somewhere in the carrying out of instructions?

A. That is the trouble, there is no provincial control. There may be local control. The Deputy Commissioner may ban a film from Lahore but there is nothing to prevent its being shown in Gujranwala for instance.

Mr. Green: I think we have discovered a fault in the procedure. The real procedure is for the District Magistrate to suspend a film to which he objects and to report it to the Provincial Government who may proscribe it.

A. I think he ought to be obliged to report it.

Colonel Crawford: You spoke rather strongly of the censorship or the lack of censorship. Would you suggest that censorship might be tightened up in any particular direction?

A. I am afraid I cannot do that, but I would like definitely a certain type of film banned, stopped from being shown.

Q. You consider that some stories of Western films to-day are not generally suitable for public display?

A. I have been thinking how I could put it to you. You know the publication "Mother India". Well, the facts in it may be correct but one puts it down to the feeling that the whole thing is wrong, that the perspective of the book is wrong and that it does not do justice to the country. It is the same thing with these films. You get certain features of Western life and you bring them away from their surroundings, showing them in surroundings that are not natural to them, and that is doing nobody any good.

Q. Well now, you seemed to make one suggestion,—I do not know whether it is carried out in your letter,—that notices should be exhibited in cinema theatres saying who the authority is to whom you should complain. The ordinary public is too ignorant to know procedure and therefore very often it does not bring its complaints to proper notice—that is a recommendation you think worth taking up?

A. It is worth taking up because one has to be very careful. It is not a question of ignorant people only but educated people also. If they make a mistake in a representation going to the wrong quarter, the thing very often is set aside for that very reason. One has to be extraordinarily careful to go to the right place at once.

Q. Just one other point. You mentioned in talking of the buildings here—probably it is slightly outside our terms of reference—that the buildings are somewhat unsatisfactory. In what way?

A. I think they are dangerous. Certain portions of the seating accommodation are exceedingly dangerous. If a fire took place I do not think anybody could get out of it.

Q. That is as regards cinemas at Lahore?

A. Yes, I have drawn attention to it officially.

### **Oral Evidence of Mr. MILES IRVING, Commissioner of Lahore, and President, Punjab Board of Film Censors, on Monday, the 28th November 1927.**

Chairman: I dare say you have had considerable experience in this province?

A. Yes, but not in the matter of cinemas. I very seldom go to cinemas.

Q. And if you go at all you go in Lahore?

A. During the last four years I have probably gone to cinemas about four times in Lahore, but now that this Committee has come into existence I hope to go to cinemas more frequently.

Q. Do you know anything about the film called "Sacrifice"?

A. No. There was a meeting of our Committee and I inquired particularly if the other members knew anything about it, but none of them did. I understand it has not been certified, but we have not been consulted.

Q. We had your members before us the other day and they gave us very interesting and instructive statements. I suppose you have seen our questionnaire. Is there anything particular you would like to tell us about?

A. I don't think so, because we have actually considered only two films so far, and they raise very interesting points.

Q. I suppose you believe in the film as an educational agency?

A. I think it has got great possibilities, but it is not essentially realistic, and I think that the technique of the film has got to find itself.

Q. Do you see the posters and handbills?

A. Yes, I do.

Q. Have you any complaint to make about them?

A. Yes. The general impression I got from them was that they are worse than the films.

Q. Now, I understand that the cinema theatres have also got a Bar attached to them?

A. Yes, nearly all of them have. I think on the Macleod Road each theatre has got a bar attached to it. There is no bar in the theatre at the back of the Fort to the best of my recollection, but most, if not all, of them in the better quarters have got a bar attached to them.

Q. Do you think that these posters require censoring? Is it true that they are not censored?

A. I think it is a matter for the police to take action if any poster is objectionable.

Q. Now, as a gentleman of experience, I want to ask you one question. You know that most of the films are passed in Bombay or Calcutta, and then they have currency throughout the rest of India unless for particular reasons applicable to a particular part of the country the Deputy Commissioner or the District Magistrate suspends a particular film and reports about it to the Local Government, in which case they can certify it as being unfit for exhibition in that province. Now, when one province differs from another province, what do you think of the idea that such a case should be decided by a Central Board on which representatives from every province will sit?

A. I think that would prove rather cumbersome. I admit the difficulties arising out of differences of opinion, but the problems may be different. For example we may find a film objectionable as raising a communal issue which is far more acute here than in Calcutta or Bombay which passed it. If every film is to be referred to the Central Board, it would delay matters.

Q. Having regard to the fact that it will be a sort of supervisory body, provincial conflicts might be avoided. Another thing which appeals to us, especially in the case of Indian productions, is, it might act as a handicap to the industry in that if a man takes all the trouble to produce a film and gets it passed by one Board, and if another Board supersedes it in another province, it will certainly be a great handicap to the industry which is in its incipient stage?

A. Yes, I see that difficulty, and I think that where there are differences of opinion between two Provincial Censor Boards, there should be a reference to a Central Board, but I am inclined to think that the authority which must be ultimately responsible for a particular film is the Provincial Government.

Q. But there will be the power of suspension in emergency by the District Magistrate. But you mean that whatever opinion the Central Board may give, the final decision should rest with the Local Government?

A. Yes, there are, of course, particularly in cases where sex immorality is concerned, many instances in which it is a matter of opinion. But there are cases in which the Central Board may give their opinion on which the Local

Governments may not be prepared to act, not only in regard to communal questions but in religious questions too. I can conceive of a large number of cases in which one Province may be affected which would not have the same effect elsewhere.

**Q.** Then you think that the final judgment should be left to the Local Government, but before it takes effective action in cancelling a certificate, the Central Board should have an opportunity of giving its opinion?

**A.** Yes, I think so.

**Colonel Crawford :** Now, your District Magistrate has got the power of suspension. Would not that power and the submission of a suspended film to your own Provincial Board be adequate?

**A.** I take it that the point you have in mind is, whether, after considering all objections, the final word as to whether a film is fit for exhibition in the Punjab should be decided by the Punjab authorities, or not. I think the final decision should rest with the Local Government in these matters.

**Q.** You have got a Censor Board here which is a nominated body of public opinion?

**A.** Even so, I gather that the Punjab Government has concurrent power.

**Q.** We find that the banning of films by the Provincial Censor Boards acts as a severe handicap to the Indian film industry. The market already is too small for the Indian productions; there are only about 350 cinemas in India, and all of them are not open, and if that market is going to be further closed by Provincial idiosyncrasies, there will not be a bright future for the film industry in this country?

**A.** I see that point, but after all the Punjab is responsible for the subject of education and also for the maintenance of law and order, and the Local Government must have its last word.

**Q.** I realise that persons responsible for law and order will always be and must be on the safe side?

**A.** That will be the tendency.

**Q.** I am suggesting that for your Local Government authority you might substitute a local advisory Censor Board such as you have now? You have a Censorship Board now, and the District Magistrate has got the right of suspension. I suggest that on suspension the film should be referred not so much to the Local Government but to your Censorship Board, and you would not mind the Local Government having a residuary power?

**A.** That is what is happening now. We have been nominated only a couple of months ago and we are sitting for that purpose.

**Q.** The film " Sacrifice " has been banned automatically and the advice of your Board has not been taken so far?

**A.** I have not heard of it. I don't know what has happened really.

**Q.** You yourself would advocate the primary reference to the Censors Board?

**A.** Yes, certainly. I take it that is what we are for.

**Mr. Green :** When a Local Government proscribes a film of its own motion, would you be inclined to agree that the producer should be given an opportunity to represent his case to the Local Government or to such local authority as the Local Government may appoint?

**A.** I would say that, taking a case in which the Local Government uses its powers, the Committee should have a say if only advisory.

**Q.** At present the Local Government can proscribe a film, suspend its certificate *suo motu* by mere notification. I was wondering whether the Local Governments would not be prepared to accept a recommendation that they should give a hearing to the person affected by that order before finally proscribing the film?

**A.** I don't see any objection to it, but of course the suspension must operate at once, because the films come and go so quickly.

**Q.** I am thinking more of a case where the film has not been shown?

A. Before we refuse to give a certificate, we have to have it seen by the Secretary.

Q. I am thinking of a film which has already been certified by one province and declared uncertified here?

A. Before we refuse to certify a film here, we have to have it seen by the Secretary, and, if necessary, by some members of the Board. As a matter of fact, we have only examined two films so far, and the whole Board saw them. But we did not have the person affected,—in fact I am not quite sure who he is,—whether he is the manager of the cinema or the owner.

Q. It is only the owner of the film?

A. But he may be in America.

Q. Shall we say the Indian owner? I am thinking particularly of Indian films. I want to give an opportunity to the owner to show cause against cancellation?

A. I don't see why he should not appear before our Board.

Q. Take the present case. The Local Government proscribes a film that has already been certified. There is full power for the Local Government to do so. I don't think the Act gives the owner of the film any right to contest the orders of the Local Government, but in mere equity should not the owner of the film have a right to represent his case before the Board? I am merely considering, and I am not criticising or attempting to criticise any particular action of Government?

A. I am only guarding myself against a course which might involve a reference to civil courts when you use the word 'rights.' If the civil courts should intervene on the ground that natural justice has not been done, there might be difficulties.

Q. At present if a Censors Board refuses a certificate, an appeal lies to the Local Government and if the Local Government steps in *suo motu* it removes the right that he has in other cases?

Chairman: It means that so long as that right does not give the man an opportunity to go to civil courts, you are agreeable to such a course? I mean, subject to that safeguard you are agreeable to it?

A. Yes, quite so.

Mr. Neogy: You think that the two departments of Government which are primarily interested in the cinema are the departments of education and law and order?

A. Yes.

Q. The Punjab Government have submitted a written statement in answer to our questionnaire, and we have been told by a witness representing the Punjab Government that the Ministry was not at all consulted in drawing up the Government memorandum. Now, from your point of view, having regard to the fact that you attach great importance to the cinema from the educational point of view, do you think that the Education Department should have no say in regard to the administration of this particular branch?

A. Are you not asking me to criticise the policy of the Government?

Q. I want your suggestion as to whether the Education Department should not be associated with the department of law and order in the administration of the cinema questions generally?

A. Not necessarily. The interest of the Education Department is on the positive side, whereas the interest of the executive Government is on the police side to see that no harm is done. The Education Department's interest lies in utilising the agency of the film to see that good is done. I would not in the least suggest bringing in the Education Department to do police work any more than I would ask the Director of Public Instruction to do the work of an executive officer.

Q. But you don't maintain, I take it, that the Board of Censors are expected to do only police work?



A. They are intended to do work which generally falls to the police. If there was nobody else, then the work of censoring an immoral play would be done by the police.

Q. Now, taking education in the broadest sense of the word, don't you think that the work of the Censorship Board has also a good deal to do with educational standards?

A. We are rather warned in the Board against using any artistic intelligence that we may possess, and we are told we are not to refuse to certify a film because it is bad art.

Q. Don't you think that the Education Department should have a say in regard to the appointment of the Board of Censors and in the matter of controlling its policy?

A. You cannot have two departments of Government controlling the same subjects. The police function must be in charge of the Member of Government, and he can only be assisted by the Minister for Education.

Q. Your opinion seems to be that the policy that should determine the constitution of the Board of Censors and the standard to be adopted by them should be dictated by the department responsible for law and order alone?

A. Yes, of course. There is no department of law and order. I am trying to think of better word—I would prefer to say that in the existing distribution of provincial subjects it falls within Reserved subjects.

### **Oral Evidence of Lala LAJPAT RAI, M.L.A., on Monday, the 28th November 1927.**

*Chairman :* We are obliged to you for finding time to come and give us your evidence. I suppose you have seen our questionnaire?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you want to make any preliminary remarks, because we have not had the benefit of your written statement. Is there anything that you would like to say in particular?

A. I really want to speak on two matters, and one of them is the question of policy to be pursued regarding the British Empire films in India. I think it would be better if you would put me questions.

Q. There has been a lot of opinion expressed to us, both by Europeans and Indians, that the cinema has got a pernicious influence on our people, especially the youth of the country. Of course you don't go to cinemas, I think?

A. I don't go to cinemas in India, but I have been going to cinemas in England and America.

Q. Do you think that the cinema has any pernicious effect on the youth of our country?

A. No more than that it has any effect in other countries. I have never heard of any particular complaint.

Q. One European gentleman who is in charge of the college youths in this province told us that there is a danger of the youths of this country being demoralised in their impressionable age on account of the undue emphasis that is laid on sexual films?

A. I do not agree with that view at all, and I will give my reasons too. First of all, the influence of the cinema is no more and no greater than the influence of the novel or the drama. The college youths read a lot of novels, both of American and English origin, and it is from the subjects of these novels that the films are mostly produced and I have no apprehension that the films are likely to be more harmful than the reading of novels and dramas. The fact is this, that the western civilization is spreading all over the world. It has its good effects and its bad effects, and we cannot have the one without the other. I am sufficiently confident that our people will be able to resist

the evil influences of the cinema on account of the general atmosphere of sexual morality that prevails in this country. Of course, there will be a few individual people who may go astray here and there, but I don't want to make that the basis for action.

*Q.* The point which is emphasised is that in some of the scenes nudity is prominent, and some of the films contain what they call the close-up scenes, and, as my friend, Col. Crawford, puts it, cabaret scenes, underworld scenes. I mean that such scenes are made to appear so largely that they have a pernicious influence upon our people. It is also said that such scenes tend to lower the western womanhood in the estimation of our people here?

*A.* I don't want the youth of this country to be brought up in a nursery. They should know all these things, because then they will be better able to resist those things when they go out. They should see all those things here and they will be able to understand better all the points of modern life.

*Q.* But they say that it is not true of the average life led there?

*A.* I am sorry I have not seen much of cabaret life, but from what I have seen, I can say that it is not very much exaggerated.

*Q.* You think the good that will be done by the cinema should outweigh any such apprehension?

*A.* The fact is you have to provide some amusement for people, because a people without excitement or amusement would become absolutely dull. And the cinema is one of those things which the west has brought to us. I don't know why we should be so much afraid of it if not of other things.

*Q.* I may tell you that a great Indian public man for whom you and I have got the greatest reverence has written to me to say that the cinema is all evil and whether it is productive of any good remains to be proved.

*A.* Then if the cinema is altogether deleted from Indian life that would be a different thing. But if it is going to stay, then I am afraid it is very difficult to make distinctions as to what kind of films should be shown and what ought not to be shown. It has its own bad side and its good side and some of us Indians who are talking of ancient ideals of Hinduism or Indian morals, they rather lay too much emphasis on the bad side of it. The circumstances are against their effects being permanent.

*Q.* You are not against censorship?

*A.* I am not against censorship—some kind of censorship.

*Q.* Of course I cannot ask your opinion whether the censorship is adequate because you don't frequent the cinemas.

*A.* Not in India, no.

*Q.* Now, I don't know if you have seen the proceedings of the Imperial Conference on which questions 22 and 23 are based.

*A.* No, but I remember to have heard them quoted in the Legislative Assembly.

*Q.* The idea seems to be that at present the world market, so far as the cinema goes, is almost monopolised by America. Naturally that fact carries with it certain consequences, namely, the spread of American ideas and activities much more than the activities or ideas of portions of the Empire. And so in the Imperial Conference they all agreed that there should be some effort made to produce films in the Empire in order to get a market in the Empire theatres. And each part of the Empire should put forth some effort to produce films. Britain itself to take the most prominent part in producing such films, she being most interested in it. Therefore the idea was suggested. It is not so much a question of Imperial preference as a question of fostering the film industry in each part of the Empire, that is the idea with which apparently the proceedings were informed: they merely threw out a suggestion that each government should consider what should be done in the matter.

*A.* That is all right. I think I can understand.

*Q.* Now, I suppose you admit that knowledge by one portion of the Empire of the activities of another portion of the Empire is essential.

A. I think knowledge of the world is essential.

Q. True, but apart from that, knowledge of other portions of the Empire is necessary so long as we belong to the Empire.

A. I don't know if there is any special reason why we should know more of the Empire than of the rest of the world.

Q. Don't you think that the Empire—

A. Well, you will pardon me, Mr. Chairman, I have no use for the Empire at all. The Empire treats us as helots everywhere, and therefore I have no affection for this Empire. My point of view cannot agree with those who love this Empire.

Q. I quite see that. But I mean—you say the Empire treats us as helots. May not one of the reasons be ignorance?

A. Not at all, it is self-interest, it is economic interest, political prestige and racial bias.

Q. You don't think there is any possibility of friendship being brought about?

A. I don't believe it is possible, so long as the present political conditions persist. Of course if conditions improve, then there will be friendship because then their mutual interests will bring them together. Then it will be time to consider preference.

Q. Apart from preference, couldn't there be a sort of reciprocal arrangement?

A. I don't see in what way we can have reciprocal arrangements with any part of the Empire. You see there are two or three things in it. Of course my opinions are already known, I have given expression to them in the Assembly. First of all, I don't agree that this is not Imperial preference. In my judgment it is Imperial preference and it is being introduced by the Government in India by the back door. They have introduced it already in the steel trade.

Q. The Bombay people disown it.

A. The Bombay people may disown or do what they like. I have to give expression to my own opinion. And my opinion is that Government propose introducing Imperial preference in the cinema trade, and I am against it. First of all, it is Imperial preference by the back door—the honest course is for the Government to ask the legislature to accept Imperial preference, either limited or wholly. Even if limited, it ought to be passed by the legislature as such. These back door efforts should be discouraged. Secondly, with reference to this particular trade, I think India will not benefit at all because for a large number of years there is no possibility of such Indian films being produced as can be patronised by any part of the Empire. That practically means that by accepting this position we shall be giving a monopoly to Empire produced films in India without getting any corresponding advantage, and that will be no good to us.

Q. I think you and I will be in agreement on that aspect of the question. So long as it does not benefit the Indian industry there is no good in having it.

A. Unless we have an industry first before we take this step, this question is entirely premature.

Q. It is only as regards the other portions, whether it will not be a means of bringing us closer together if, with safeguards for the Indian film industry, we can enter into an arrangement.

A. But we don't propose to exclude Empire films. Let them come in on their own merits. And I may tell you from the little experience I had of one Indian film which was exhibited in England that even the best of them have no chance either in Great Britain or any part of the Empire. I am referring to "The Light of Asia." It did not attract sufficient attention although it was seen by the King and I heard praises of it from many other individuals. I am speaking from personal experience. I went twice to the film in London and the house was very thin. The galleries were entirely empty and only in the middle of the hall there were a few people, and I consider and many people

consider that that film was a very well done film. But it didn't attract large audiences.

*Q.* On the other hand, we were told that it made a good profit in Europe.

*A.* That it might have. I believe it. But not in England. I am talking of London. It may be that unfortunately I went on two days when there were not big attendances.

*Mr. Green :* Can you tell us how long it ran for?

*A.* I couldn't tell you exactly. I think it must have run for a pretty long period, because they had taken a hall on contract.

*Chairman :* Who had taken the hall on contract?

*A.* The proprietors.

*Q.* Not the usual exhibitors?

*A.* No, those who produced it, the managers. Mr. Bipin Chandra Pal's son was associated with it and he was managing it and they could not possibly close it. After all they had to show it even to a few people.

*Q.* The usual exhibitors did not exhibit it?

*A.* No. It was exhibited only in one particular hall in one of the back streets of London—Great Portland Street.

*Mr. Green :* Was that the Philharmonic Hall? Some of the best films have been shown there.

*A.* May be. But it is not the usual amusement centre. It is much beyond that. And the usual amusement centre is where you get large audiences.

*Q.* Did it attract much press notice?

*A.* I think it did attract some press notice, but I couldn't say how much, because I didn't follow it.

*Q.* So your impression is that it didn't show well at all?

*A.* That is my impression.

*Q.* I suppose you are for using the film as an agent for educating the masses?

*A.* Yes, I am.

*Q.* And you think Government should put forth an effort in educational and other films?

*A.* Not only education but health—public utility films generally. I am very strongly in favour of it.

*Q.* And you think public money should be spent on it?

*A.* Yes, I am in favour of public money being spent on such films.

*Q.* Would you advocate scholarships for eligible youths to go and learn the technique in Germany?

*A.* Indians, yes.

*Q.* And do you think that some direct or indirect aid should be given by Government to these indigenous industries in this direction?

*A.* Well, so far as these educational and health films are concerned, I don't think you will find any industrialists to undertake these films. They will probably have to be done either by the Government or by the industrialists at the cost of Government.

*Q.* But for amusement films?

*A.* For amusement films I am not inclined to advocate Government help at the present stage. We have many industries which are most necessary. I am in favour first of Government aid being given to those industries which are absolutely necessary for life, which will make us self-contained. Amusement industries must take a back seat.

*Q.* But, as you know, this cinema has come to stay.

*A.* Oh, yes.

*Q.* And then healthy guidance to that is necessary. After all, amusement to the poor is also a necessity, don't you recognise that?

A. Yes, but you know that there are many other things in which we are very backward and I want the Government to make the best use of public revenues and I don't think public revenues ought to be spent on this particular industry unless we have taken care of other industries. We are not fostering other industries which are absolutely essential for any self-respecting nation.

Q. At any rate would you put it on a par with other industries?

A. No, I am afraid not. Not for Government help. If for example any help could be given to these producers by way of asking them to produce educational and health films, and using their machinery for that purpose, I would not object. Instead of the Government making them direct, they can have such films made by these industrialists.

Q. I suppose you are for lowering or abolishing the duty on raw materials connected with the industry?

A. Yes, I would like that.

Q. And would you impose heavier duties on foreign films?

A. I would not mind.

Q. Would you advocate it?

A. Well, I do not know : I have not quite made up my mind on that point.

Q. As regards the machinery of censorship, of course you know the present system of the local board?

A. I understand that there are two censorship boards, one at Calcutta and one at Bombay.

Q. There is also one at Madras and one at Rangoon and one in your own province recently. As you know, now, if a film is certified by one board, it has currency throughout unless it is suspended or cancelled—suspended by the District Magistrate and afterwards cancelled by the local government. It has currency throughout India. Now there have been several suggestions about it. Some say that there should be a central board instead of provincial boards, located somewhere or other, probably in a port town. That is one suggestion. Secondly, in addition to provincial boards, have a central board to deal with matters on which the provincial boards are likely to differ or have differed. So that one province's certificate may not be cancelled by another province but be cancelled only on the opinion of the central board.

A. I am in favour of boards being appointed at port towns and then for having a central board also for the limited purpose. But I would insist that the censor boards in all these ports should be appointed by municipal corporations and not by government and the central board should be appointed by the central legislature, representative of all the communities.

Q. Now, one difficulty as regards these boards in the port towns is that, when the productions multiply in local areas, say, for instance, the Punjab local production takes place, it will be very inconvenient for producers to take their films to Karachi or Bombay to get them censored.

A. No doubt, there is that drawback. In that case you will have to start provincial boards but I think it is too premature. We have not got this industry in all the provinces and to have the machinery before we have any experience of how this industry is going to develop is rather premature. But I don't mind; if you want provincial boards, you can appoint them provided they are appointed by the local legislatures.

Q. For the purpose of censoring Indian films?

A. Yes, the other films will be passed in the port towns. I am told that the Deputy Commissioners even now have the right to suspend. So, in this case, if they find anything particularly objectionable in any film relating to their province, they can stop its exhibition.

Q. Now, there is one point. Unfortunately the Indian industry suffers from the risk of provincial conflicts. It may be a good film but it stands the risk of being cancelled in another province. We have had one instance very recently of a very good film being cancelled in the Punjab, whereas it has been passed

in Bombay—one of the best efforts in Indian production that I have so far seen. What is your suggestion?

A. So far as any films are concerned which are objected to by religious communities or on religious grounds, enough protection can be afforded by the censors in ports. If the censor boards are sufficiently representative and if any film slips in in such a way as to escape the notice of a censor board, then the deputy commissioner can take action. I don't find the evil is so common that the Government could make any special provision for it.

Mr. Neogy : A distinguished Indian witness at Lahore, Mr. Yusuf Ali, has made a statement that most of the films exhibited are demoralising and that even the films which would be harmless in England or America would carry harmful suggestions to an Indian audience.

A. I don't agree at all. Of course, it all depends upon one's conception of morality. I don't want our young men to be absolutely ignorant of the conditions which prevail in Europe and America. And I think the risk is very small, if there is any. Therefore, I want them to see all sides of the life of the west.

Q. Mr. Yusuf Ali in his oral evidence not only sought to make a distinction between England and America and England and India but also between one province in India and another, and also between urban and rural areas. From your experience in the Punjab, are you prepared to say that the standard to be adopted by the censorship authorities for the purpose of allowing a film to be shown in rural areas should be different from the standard to be adopted for Lahore, for instance?

A. I am very strongly of opinion that the rural people are much more moral to resist any demoralising influences than the towns people and I think the Punjab peasantry is such a sturdy peasantry that a few films would not have any demoralising effect on it at all.

Q. Why carry any demoralising influence at all to such a people?

A. That depends on, as I have already said, what view you take as to what is demoralising.

Q. Do you think the rural people of the Punjab understand the ways of western civilisation sufficiently to be able to interpret these pictures in their proper light?

A. You will pardon me, too much is being said about interpreting these things. You have to see the thing as it is presented to you on the canvas. What is the interpretation going to be? This is not a psychological problem.

Q. What they say is that the people might think this to be the normal life in the west.

A. It may not be normal but it is the life as it is lived. I have not seen a single film, either in England or America, which did not present actual life. It may not be the normal life, it may not be the life of certain classes, but it is life certainly.

Q. It is not imaginary altogether?

A. I don't believe it is.

Q. You think they can be safely shown to the uneducated?

A. Well, the uneducated people won't go there because these films attract those who can read the captions. Very few uneducated people go to these shows. I think too much is being made of them. How many rural people come to Lahore or Amritsar to see these things? I think the percentage will be infinitely small. There may be illiterate people in towns, but actually the rural people cannot afford to stay over to see these things.

Q. Having regard to the fact that rural Punjab contributed a good deal to the war in men, do you think that they have sufficient acquaintance with western life already not to be spoiled as it were by viewing western films?

A. Spoiled or not spoiled, you have to take all the risks of life. Why make so much fuss about their being spoiled? I don't think our morals are being protected in other ways so much as to necessitate Government establishing special machinery to protect our morals in this.

*Chairman* : What do you mean—in other ways?

A. Well, there are so many other ways. You allow white prostitutes to come into this country. Why can't they be stopped if the Government is so anxious for our morals? There are many other things which the Government have taken no action on.

Q. But the white slave traffic has been taken in hand.

A. No, Sir, the white slave traffic is another thing. The actual prohibition of any white prostitutes in this country. I think, is a different step altogether. Calcutta and Bombay are said to be full of them.

*Mr. Neogy* : Perhaps you would add also the policy about the drink evil.

A. Exactly. Government makes money out of that.

*Chairman* : But one failure doesn't justify another?

A. No. But I think this attempt is not *bona fide*. This attempt is a purely economic attempt to foist British films on India.

Q. Do you really believe that India is such a big market?

A. Otherwise why is the Imperial Conference anxious? They can leave us alone for the present at least. It is going to be a big market.

Q. You say that with 4,000 theatres in England and only 350 in India?

A. Well, they have done nothing in England to stop American films.

Q. They are trying.

A. They won't do it, because America is a free country. They won't stand any nonsense.

Q. You know the quota system?

A. Well, in certain respects the quota system may do some good but they cannot stop there. And we would like to see Japan, if it comes forward, have a market here.

Q. Why not India?

A. Well, India also. I am not so very anxious for the Indian industry in this connection, though I would welcome it.

*Mr. Neogy* : Now, I will come to another expression of opinion of Mr. Yusuf Ali. He says: "Politically the exhibition of immoral life in the West is harmful and brings into contempt western civilisation."

A. Why does he think them immoral; the west does not think them immoral.

Q. From the point of view of the west it may be all right.

A. But the west wants to educate us in its own moral standards. I mean to say if we have to adopt their standards of morality and if our standards of morality are so low as Miss Mayo has painted them, why is it to our benefit to adopt western standards? We would morally improve.

Q. Even if we believe it is low.

A. I don't know. My point is this, that too much fuss is being made of this. Absolutely too much. Without making any reflection I think this committee was not needed at all. It is a pure waste of public money.

*Chairman* : Anyhow this is not the place to say it.

A. You put it to me and I said it.

*Mr. Neogy* : It has been stated that American ideas of things as presented in the cinema are quite different from British ideas and in so far as they differ they are harmful to India.

A. I think it will be to our advantage to know American manners.

Q. But do they differ so vastly—American and British?

A. Only, of course, America is much more daring, being a new country. It is much more adventurous at the present moment in certain things. For example, the cinemas that come from the west of the United States, from California, Los Angeles, they show more daring attempts, more adventurous

life than any British films do. Because the country is so big, they have the setting for it.

*Col. Crawford* : I understand they have 12,000 murders a year.

A. Well, murders occur every day in England too. Civilisation is adding to the number of murders, not reducing it.

*Mr. Neogy* : Did you come across any instance in which a film had misrepresented Indians abroad?

A. Several. There are very few actors who know enough of the east.

Q. It is not deliberate misrepresentation?

A. I think it is. Both in America and England. The object is to show the discreditable side, the dark side, of eastern life. Not only of India but of all eastern life. For example, I have seen several pictures in which harem life is depicted and nude pictures are given of Indian women and many nude parts. To show there are so many harems, so many nabobs in India—all this I have seen depicted in the canvas.

Q. Where were they produced?

A. In the country of exhibition. In America. Well, of course they sometimes get the help of Indians themselves. I may recite a case. When I was running the India Home Rule League office in New York one enthusiastic producer came to me and asked my help in producing a certain film which contained Indian scenes. He wanted certain people to pose. I said, "yes, provided you show me the whole plot. If there is anything in the film which is false or framed to discredit Indian morality I won't give you any help." The man never turned up again. And I have heard of Indian boys and girls there being made to play parts which are absolutely false and discreditable.

Q. Have you seen any such films in England too?

A. Not very many. But I think I have seen some films there also, where this part of Indian life, of having many wives and the domestic side of Indian life, is very much prominently brought to the front.

Q. But don't you think we should take action against any country which does it?

A. You can't take any action. You can only take action perhaps against certain producers by stopping their films coming into India. But I am perfectly certain the Government of India as at present constituted will never do it.

*Chairman* : But would you ask this Committee to recommend it?

A. Yes. I would like this Committee to recommend it.

*Mr. Neogy* : Do you think the services of consuls might be utilised?

A. Don't talk of consuls. I have had sad experiences. The consuls of the British Empire have absolutely no feeling for Indians anywhere in the world. Their taking any action about films—that is impossible. I have visited many countries in Europe and one or two in Asia too, and I have seen these consuls. They do not take any interest.

*Mr. Green* : I have been extremely interested in the views which you have put forward, with many of which I am in substantial agreement. In your view any risk of demoralisation that there is, is amply compensated by the educative effect?

A. I think so.

Q. May I read a sentence from a report or memorandum by the Social Hygiene Delegation which visited India only 2 or 3 years ago? They seriously put forward the view that the evil influence of the cinema has been cited by educationists and representative citizens as one of the major factors in lowering the standard of sex conduct and thereby tending to increase the dissemination of disease. Do you think any such terrible effects could be ascribed to the cinema?

A. I do not think so, not in India in the least.

Q. I am referring to India.



A. Not in India.

Q. You refer to one Indian film that you had seen, "The Light of Asia". It was not, I think, Indian in the sense that it was completely produced, enacted, photographed by Indians.

Mr. Neogy: Enacted exclusively by Indians.

A. Was it not produced in India?

Mr. Green: Yes. Have you seen any real Indian film which was entirely produced by Indians?

A. I have not seen any.

Chairman: That was printed and edited in Germany.

A. I do not know about it.

Q. The Committee have seen a film of that nature which the European members of the Committee, at any rate, considered had an excellent chance of a good reception in England.

A. May be possible.

Q. You would welcome a film of that nature being exhibited in England?

A. Yes.

Q. Now, may I take you to the question of public utility films, of which you and I and the Committee also are strongly in favour. It has been suggested that the most suitable method of producing them might be for the Local Governments to pool their resources by starting an up-to-date studio with, at first, foreign experts—Germany has been suggested to us as being the place where we can get good men cheaply—and that that central studio should produce films for educative purposes, public health, agriculture and so on, for all the provinces. Do you consider that it would be a good idea?

A. I would welcome such a scheme provided the number of foreign experts is not so large as to consume a large amount of Indian money. I am afraid of that.

Q. It would be expensive in the first 2 or 3 years.

Chairman: You can get them on short term contracts.

A. I have my own fear. We are adding department after department for foreign experts to come in and our own boys get no chance whatever anywhere.

Mr. Green: The object of having short term contracts with experts is they would be able to train Indians to carry on their work.

A. If you make an agreement with them—that is exactly what is being done in Japan—if you make short term contracts with the experts in order to give our men training.....

Q. Do you say it is actually being done in Japan at present?

A. Not exclusively with regard to the cinema, but with regard to all industries.

Q. You would welcome a scheme of that nature if it was found practicable?

A. Yes, subject to those remarks which I have already made about preference for other industries. I do not attach so much importance to this industry as to make it a very highly expensive department or create a department for it.

Q. You are not frightened that it might injure indigenous companies already existing by taking away from them the possibility of work?

A. As I have already said, if it might be possible for those indigenous companies to produce these films, they ought to be encouraged and Government should not make it a Government department.

Q. The trouble at present is that the Indian producing companies, those already operating in the commercial sphere, have already got too much to do and they cannot produce sufficient films to meet the demand.

A. I am afraid the educational films, health films, will have to be shown freely, and they won't bring in revenue. In that way, of course, Govern-

ment will have to do something to encourage those films, but what that something should be exactly and in what form is a thing which, in my judgment, ought to be threshed out in the Finance Committee.

*Q.* Certainly it would. I think we may take it, if we make a suggestion that contemplates the expending of money we shall not have the final word.

*Mr. Neogy:* There are two ways of assisting the industry, one by direct subvention, and the other is by entrusting the manufacture of these propaganda and educational films to private manufacturers of films, that is to say, assuring them of some Government custom.

*A.* I think you can partly do both.

*Chairman:* I thought Mr. Green was dealing with that point.

*Mr. Green:* I do not mind Mr. Neogy putting that question. I think Mr. Neogy's point was that the formation of a central studio by Government might cripple the existing companies.

*A.* I am not in favour of a central studio being formed by Government.

*Q.* I mean, for instructional films only and not for commercial films, and I understood you to say that you would welcome such a scheme.

*A.* I do not think I have thought over the matter very much, and I want to reserve my freedom of action in the Assembly. I cannot give a final opinion on a question which I have not studied.

*Q.* I take you now to the question of censorship boards. I do not ask you about the results of their work because you have told us you are not a frequenter of the cinema.

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* You wished the boards, wherever they be, whether provincial or central, to be elected. Can you give us any idea of the number of members of the boards that you contemplate?

*A.* Appointed by elected bodies.

*Q.* All communities and religions should be represented?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* That will necessarily mean a board of some size?

*A.* I do not think it will be a board of more than 5.

*Q.* If we had a central board with 5 members would it represent the whole of India?

*A.* The central board might have a larger number, say, 7. In the port towns I think a board of 5 will be quite enough.

*Q.* Is it your idea that the members of the boards themselves should censor all films?

*A.* No. I do not think so. I think it would be very difficult.

*Q.* They would appoint stipendiaries who would be responsible for the primary inspection?

*A.* If the body whom we have in view will ask for volunteers they will find in every port town some people who would be willing to do that work without any payment as an honorary job. I have seen that in America.

*Q.* Are you aware of the amount of work to be done?

*A.* No.

*Q.* In Bombay alone at this day it is 3½ hours' work, merely inspecting films, 5 days in the week for the whole year.

*A.* Is it so? I remember to have seen the work of the censorship board in New York, but I am not sure whether they are paid men or not.

*Q.* I think they are paid.

*A.* Then I have nothing more to say.

*Q.* But would you be satisfied with a board of the nature you have indicated, with officers appointed by themselves to inspect the films in the first instance and to report to the board if they were in any doubt?

A. Yes. I have no objection to these men.

Q. You do not consider it necessary for the members of the boards themselves to see the films?

A. Not all the films.

*Colonel Crawford:* I have also been very much interested in what you have said. The first point I would like to take with you is this. I take it the cinema is the poor man's entertainment?

A. Yes.

Q. From what I can see it appears that the film has given, in so far as the west is concerned, a very definite orientation to the mentality of the masses. We have in England a distinct Americanisation of outlook and language from the constant display of American films. I do not say whether it is harmful or not. But it seems perfectly obvious that your film has a very great effect on the mentality of the audiences that constantly go there. Looking at it from that point of view, and I understand you have seen many western films at home, are you in your own mind satisfied with the type of story that is generally placed upon the film?

A. It all depends upon the kind of theatre in which the picture is exhibited. For example, in New York or in London, if a picture is exhibited in a high class theatre where the prices are pretty high, it will be first class picture. It will be a picture which will not have the shady side of life. But in a cheap place the picture is bound to be of that kind, and you cannot dissociate the one from the other. It is difficult. It all depends upon the price which either the theatre or the audience pays.

Q. I wanted to know whether you had any criticism yourself to make of the general type of story that you have seen there.

A. It is very difficult to say because there is no general type of story. I have seen many kinds of films and it is very difficult to standardise them.

*Mr. Green:* If it is a fact that small prices mean bad films, does it not rather lend point to the allegation that we do receive bad films in India where the prices are low?

A. It does not necessarily mean bad films. It all depends upon the standards of the theatre which produces them.

*Colonel Crawford:* As a man of culture I want to know whether you consider the story which the producer now gives to the public could not be generally improved?

A. It is very difficult to say. For example, there are historical films. Such pictures as "Les Misérables" and "The Last Days of Pompeii" are very educative. Things like these I have seen many of them, and they are of immense value. It all depends upon the censorship. If your censorship is sufficiently active, then they can delete all those very objectionable films which are considered to be bad. But I do not think it is possible to make any distinction so far as the general policy is concerned.

Q. I notice you said, in so far as demoralisation is concerned, that the cinema was no worse than the novel. With that opinion I would agree so far as the two apply to particular audiences. But I take it that the cinema has a wider and more far-reaching effect than the novel, because anybody with eyes can understand a cinema whereas you have got to have a certain amount of culture to read a novel. From that point of view does the cinema make a wider appeal and is it possibly on a different basis?

A. But by the time the cinema becomes very common in India, I think the people of this country will have those novels in every possible vernacular. Even at present the translations of western novels are becoming more common, and in my judgment novels are going to have a very much larger.....

Q. You do not think even from that point of view the cinema has a.....

A. I cannot deny that there is some difference, because a man who cannot read a novel can see a film. The film gives only certain portions of the story whereas the novel gives the whole story.

**Q.** You mentioned the fact that the shady side of life was shown and I quite agree with you it is true. From the point of view that the producer acts definitely from commercial instinct so as to make a profit, do you think that he unduly emphasises or draws unduly from the shady side of life?

**A.** I do not know. It is very difficult to say that unless you criticise a particular film. That is a very general statement which it is very difficult to make. I believe no civilised country which has some system of censorship will allow films to be produced and exhibited which give an entirely false idea of the life lived in that country. Do you think that the United States Government will allow the production of any films which show their life in the worst light? There may be a little exaggeration here and there.....

**Q.** You think it is a matter for the censors?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** With regard to your point that Imperial preference is a thing that must be considered, and I agree it can only be considered, in the Legislative Assembly and it has got to be accepted there. I am not in agreement with the imposing of Imperial preference on India without its consent. But when you come down to this film industry, I have a belief that the biggest foreign market for films is America, in fact, we have evidence to show that 90 per cent. of the profits on films come from America. We have in India a small market. If our industry is to improve we have to search for a foreign market if we can get it. I have seen the film "Sacrifice" which I consider could be successfully shown in America and Europe. It may not get across to-day because the exhibitors in foreign countries are not prepared to let our industry up, and that is particularly, I believe, so in America. They say "We will take good films if they are produced", but we have our doubts as to whether that is so.....

**A.** They are as patriotic as Englishmen.

**Q.** Let us say it is so in England also. Can we do anything to assist to get our films a foreign market provided always that we produce the necessary quality?

**A.** To be absolutely plain, as long as our political conditions exist as they are, I will not advocate or be a party to any preference being given to anything produced in the Empire. If they produce, the people of the Empire, better films the exhibitors in this country will take them.

**Q.** I do not want any film from abroad to come to this country except on its merits, irrespective of the country of origin. I am thinking of Indian films going abroad.....

**A.** There are no Indian films.

**Q.** I think they are coming.

**A.** Not for the next 25 years. You will see that. I mean films worth exhibiting in any country of the world.

**Q.** Would you agree so far as to say, if we could get a reciprocal arrangement, say, "All right, we do not mind giving you one per cent. in our theatres on condition that you take one per cent. of ours."

**A.** I do not want any reciprocal arrangement to be made with regard to this industry alone. I do not want to pick out this industry for reciprocal arrangement. If reciprocal arrangements are to be made, they must be made as a matter of broad policy, with regard to other industries also, not with regard to this industry alone. I do not think this industry is of sufficient importance to be picked out for reciprocal arrangement.

**Q.** I am rather interested in what you said about "The Light of Asia" not drawing. Do you think that was due to the fact that cinema audiences at home may desire particular forms of action in the film pictures they see?

**A.** I do not think they are very much interested in this kind of thing unless it is something sensational. There is nothing sensational in that picture. It is a picture which in some places moralises and English people have no use for such a film, I mean the ordinary Englishman. Of course, some people are interested in that and they do go.

**Q.** To get Indian films across in America, an American gentleman told us that we ought to produce good comic films.

**A.** They will ridicule us.

**Q.** I do not say they should make them, but we should make them ourselves here.

**A.** If we want to make films for exhibition to them then we shall have to pander to their taste, and they will want only such things as will ridicule us.

*Mr. Green:* Does Charlie Chaplin ridicule America?

**A.** It does not show any social life. It only gives comic pictures of his own movements and sometimes I consider it to be very ridiculous.

**Q.** That is exactly the American idea of the short comic pictures which he wanted to be produced in India.

**A.** I do not think we can produce a Charlie Chaplin in India for the next 25 years.

*Colonel Crawford:* We have also seen an Indian Douglas Fairbanks. You are rather opposed to Government singling out this particular industry for any particular help, because you say it comes low down in the order of precedence. Don't you think that visual instruction would be a very useful and cheap method of giving education to our masses?

**A.** Yes, it is very good. If you use the film in educational institutions it will be very useful.

**Q.** Don't you think that some of the entertainment films also are of very definite educative value? I am thinking of the ordinary commercial entertainment films.

**A.** It will be very difficult to select them. It all depends upon the point of view of the man who selects them.

*Mr. Neogy:* The man who sees also?

**A.** Yes, but mostly on the man who selects them for exhibition in educational institutions. For example, the department may be very very much interested in showing pictures which show the glories of the British Empire. I do not think the Indian students would be the better for it.

*Colonel Crawford:* But what I say is it looks as if the cinema habit in India is spreading very rapidly, and these ordinary entertainment films not prepared by Government at all, but just the ordinary commercial film—would it not be of definite education value?

**A.** I could not catch your question.

**Q.** The cinema habit is increasing rapidly all over India into the rural areas and would not that be of a definite educative value?

**A.** I do not believe it. I do not think it is going to spread into the rural areas. In the rural areas you have first of all to build palaces or buildings for the cinema. And our rural people are not in a position to spend money even for going and seeing a picture. I think there is absolutely no danger so far as the rural areas are concerned. It is rapidly spreading in India, but if you compare the film palaces in big cities in Europe with those that exist in towns like Lahore or Delhi there is no comparison between the two. In a city like Lahore, if it were in America, there would be at least 50 theatres, even with a population of 300,000. Sometimes you will find the picture palaces of these big cities, almost all of them, full.

*Mr. Neogy:* We have a statement that about one-fifth of the total population in America go to see the pictures every day.

*Colonel Crawford:* I believe the cinema in the rural areas will be something in the nature of a travelling cinema.

**A.** It is sufficiently far off and we need not legislate for it now. The habit of legislating in advance does no good to anybody.

**Q.** I am not talking of legislation at all, but I only wanted to know about its educational effect.

A. So far as educational and health films are concerned, I will do everything in my power to encourage them.

Q. You spoke of local Legislatures selecting your censorship boards. Would they select individuals or public bodies to do the nominating?

A. All parties and all communities are represented in the legislatures and they can select individuals.

Mr. Neogy: Not necessarily from their own body?

A. Not necessarily from the Legislatures.

Colonel Crawford: Would you not find it a little more practical for the legislature to say, "We select particular public bodies and it is your duty to nominate from them"?

A. No. I think it will complicate matters.

Q. One of the things we think may be a stumbling block to the development of the industry is that it has not a market, the market in India is not very big, and a large amount of that is cut off on account of the necessities of provinces regarding communal and religious feelings. Have you any suggestion to make as to how we can get over that difficulty, or is it a difficulty which the industry must face?

A. That depends upon the religious sense of the people. I may mention that the people have become very sensitive during the last few years about their religious susceptibilities, and so long as this mentality continues, and this may continue for a few years more, the film industry will not prosper. That is a very great difficulty, because you see all historical films will have some kind of dealing with the different communities in India. For example, like the film "Vir Durgadas". It has been objected to by the Mussalmans. Similarly there will be other kinds of films that may be objected to by the Hindus. So long as the present religious mentality prevails, the film industry will have a difficult time.

Q. It has got that very definite limitation at present?

A. Yes. Many of the phases of Indian life have more or less something to do with religion. Therefore we have yet to advance a bit in diminishing the sensitiveness about religious matters. It has developed within the last 3 or 4 years to a great extent. So we will have to pass through this religious storm and it will take some time.

Q. The censorship, from that point of view, must remain for the present?

A. Yes.

### **Oral Evidence of Rai Bahadur KUNJ BIHARI THAPAR, O.B.E., on Monday, the 28th November 1927.**

Chairman: We have not had the advantage of a statement from you. Are you a frequenter of cinemas?

A. Fairly.

Q. Here in Lahore?

A. Yes, mostly. I have seen cinemas in Delhi and Karachi also.

Q. You go to the cinemas fairly frequently?

A. I should not say frequently, but now and again; sometimes in the winter but oftener than in the summer.

Q. Where do you go when you go?

A. To the Elphinstone, the Excelsior, and sometimes to those in the city also.

Q. There was one thing which I heard last night, and I do not know whether you can bear it out. There are bars attached to the cinemas?

A. Yes.

Q. Is it a fact that women are used for advertising the show?

A. I have not heard, nor have I seen it.

Q. Have you seen any such thing?

A. No.

Q. Women wearing the dress which is depicted in the film itself?

A. I have not seen it.

Q. Now, do you think the Bar is an asset in the cinemas?

A. For certain classes of visitors it is; they want a little drink sometimes.

Q. Would you have them removed from the cinemas?

A. I would not remove them altogether. I would insist on the proprietor supervising it properly.

Q. That is a very vague thing, isn't it?

A. Let there be no abuse, no excess of drinking and all that; but if a man wants an occasional peg, he should be able to have it.

Q. Especially where young college boys and women go, is there any use for bars?

A. I don't think young women or college students frequent the bar; they go to see the cinema.

Q. For whom are you thinking the bar should be there?

A. There are others besides students. There are grown up people, Indians and Englishmen, mostly Englishmen. There are very few Indians who take drinks at these bars outside their houses, even among the moderate drinkers.

Q. Do you think the Englishmen would complain if the bar is removed from these cinemas?

A. I think so.

Q. Even in the Civil Lines?

A. Even in the Civil Lines. I had some experience at the Industrial Exhibition, of which I was secretary in 1909. There were a number of temperance people on the committee and they had a resolution passed to the effect that there should be no bar at all and no alcoholic drinks served anywhere. We found a great deal of inconvenience on account of that and we had to ask the Deputy Commissioner to give us a licence which we found was never abused.

Q. Well, are you satisfied with the present censorship?

A. I have not any detailed knowledge of it but I think I am satisfied.

Q. But I mean, with the pictures as they are shown—do you think there is nothing objectionable being shown?

A. Sometimes there might be, but as a whole the pictures are good enough.

Q. Here and there may be some extravagances?

A. Extravagance, yes, they overdo the thing a little; but on the whole I think they are not bad.

Q. You recognise it as a necessary evil accompanying the industry itself that such attractions are needed?

A. Of course, people go there to entertain and amuse themselves.

Q. And therefore such things are needed?

A. More or less.

Q. In order to make the trade flourish?

A. In order to let the cinema go on.

Q. So that is your point of view. You don't think there is any evil in that way such as to call for any action just now?

A. No. Action is called for in another direction. If efforts could be made to make the cinema an instrument for education and for diffusing knowledge, that would be a very good thing.

Q. That is more for the Government to do, not for the public?

A. It is for the people.

Q. It is not a paying proposition commercially to prepare educational films.

A. When I say educational, I do not mean education in its narrow sense. For instance, just at present there is a good deal of ignorance about India in the British Isles and in the countries comprising the British Empire and *vice versa*. If we could have Empire films they would give us a better and a truer picture of those countries, and if Indian pictures prepared here could also give the best side of Indian life to those Empire countries, it would be a great advantage.

Q. Have you seen any Indian films?

A. I have seen some.

Q. Where?

A. In Lahore. I was told they were Indian films but they were mostly religious.

Q. Do you think that will have an attraction for the foreign market? Take England, do you think there is any use in other parts of the Empire for our Indian films?

A. I think there may be some. For instance, the drama of "Harish Chandra."

Q. Do you think they would care for it?

A. They might. I understand in America and other countries Indians go and give lectures and a number of people go to listen to them, mostly on Indian subjects.

Q. That is a personal thing. But do you think a cinema-going audience in America or England would care for Indian pictures?

A. Well, we might improve them and give them some idea of Indian life and Indian culture.

Q. You think therefore some effort should be made to make better productions in India and encourage the growth of Indian films?

A. Yes.

Q. You think public money should be spent in such a way?

A. Yes, judiciously, not in wholesale subsidies. If a company or a man has started a concern and has produced really good work and if he requires encouragement, I see no reason why he should not get it.

Q. In that way you would help the growth of the industry?

A. Yes.

Q. And eventually acquaint our conditions to other parts of the Empire and other parts of the world. At present there is no chance of competing with the other parts of the Empire.

A. That, of course, is not yet possible.

Q. You are anxious to safeguard the interests of India in any such bargain?

A. Yes. For instance, in this matter of preference I would give preference to films from England and from the British Empire on the condition that Indian films also were treated in those countries on the same footing.

Q. That is, we will find a market for their goods if they find a market for our goods. It must be a reciprocal arrangement?

A. Yes.

Q. If that is not possible and if it is not going to be of any practical use to India you would not advocate it? If it is not going to be advantageous to India you would not advocate such an arrangement?

A. I would still give preference to British Empire films.

Q. Even if it is not advantageous to India?



A. I don't think they would refuse. Why should they refuse Indian films?

Q. It depends on the audience?

A. That might mean that fewer Indian films would go from here.

Q. The result would be that British goods will find an audience here but Indian goods will not find an audience there.

A. I don't suppose so. It may be so to begin with and for a number of years we might get more of their films than they will take of our films; but I think later on things will adjust themselves, and when the Indian film industry is sufficiently developed it may make its way there.

Q. That will be some years hence. And on that possibility you would still give preference to British Empire films?

A. I would still give preference on the ground, in the first place, that we form part of the British Empire. The British have claims on India. They have done such a lot for India in developing India and so on.

Q. So that you don't mind British films capturing the field in the same way as American films do now?

A. No.

Q. Don't you think it would be competing with the Indian film industry? How do you expect the Indian film industry to grow if you allow free entrance to others?

A. There is that point, but when I say preference, I mean preference over other countries' films.

Q. Still what does it matter? You substitute A for B, the domination of A for the domination of B, without safeguarding the interests of your country. A reciprocal arrangement I can understand.

A. On the other hand, if you insist on heavy duties for outside films the result will be that we will get fewer outside films and that would not very much benefit the Indian Industry, because my belief is that protection really is not the thing. A great deal depends on management, on keeping the cost of production as low as possible.

Q. I suppose you know that Indian films are getting more and more popular with the Indian people?

A. I hear they are.

Q. Can you tell me why Indian capital fights shy of it?

A. Because it has not yet become a very popular industry. Leaving out large towns, presidency towns, where there are cinemas—for instance, in the Punjab leaving out Amritsar, Lahore and, I believe, one or two other places, there is no cinema anywhere; so it is not, and I don't think for a long time to come it will become, a very popular industry—popular in the sense that the masses and everybody else will be interested in it.

Mr. Neogy: How many Indian films have you seen?

A. I should say about a dozen or so, from time to time?

Q. Did you notice any European audience on those occasions?

A. In the civil lines I have, but in the city I have not noticed many.

Q. What was the particular Indian film in the city which attracted European audiences?

A. I cannot remember but I think those were generally Europeans who frequent cinemas. They sometimes also see some of these old Indian dramas. I have seen Europeans attending some of our Indian theatres where the scenery and everything else was Indian; but not many of them.

Q. But does that encourage you to hope that these films will be popular in England? If Englishmen residing in India do not go to see these films in sufficient numbers, what is there to encourage you in thinking that they will be more popular in England?

A. For this reason—Englishmen here are very few and they are mostly officials; but there are people who would like to see films depicting Indian history and many people would go to see them. There is a large English population there; whereas here, even in Lahore, the English people are not many. The railway people in Lahore, for instance, have their own cinema hall and they seldom go to the city. They have their own arrangement in the cantonment.

Q. You imagine that Englishmen would take the same interest in an Indian subject as you and I take in an English subject?

A. I should say so, to a considerable extent. Some of the Indian pictures of Indian history would appeal to them.

Q. But are you quite satisfied with the quality of the Indian pictures you have seen as compared with the quality of the foreign pictures?

A. You mean in technique?

Q. Yes, technique.

A. Well, they leave a good deal to be desired, but as a beginning they are worth encouraging.

Q. So far as we are concerned, they are worth encouraging, but do you think that the interest which other parts of the British Empire take in India and Indian subjects is sufficiently great for them to condone these defects in the films and still go to see these films, when they can go to their own cinemas and see their own Western pictures?

A. My object in introducing the Indian film into other countries is to excite and stimulate interest in those countries in India.

Q. Your object is that, but how are you going to attain your object?

A. I mean we should do our best here.

Q. Improve the quality of the pictures first?

A. Certainly.

Q. Till then it is not practical politics to think of popularising Indian films in other countries?

A. But Indian films are not quite so bad as you seem to think.

Chairman: "The Light of Asia" did not draw in America and England?

Mr. Green: I am not quite sure that we are all prepared to accept a statement of that kind.

A. Well, take that book "The Light of Asia". It was very popular, one of the popular books of the season; and I do not know why the film did not draw larger audiences. It might have been screened at a bad time, an inconvenient season. "The Light of Asia" film ought to attract people there, I don't mean the working people. It was not a rage in England but a film like that will attract the cultured classes.

Mr. Neogy: That is your only hope. Would you advocate a system for the benefit of the Indian film industry here under which every cinema theatre would be compelled to show a proportion of Indian films, that is to say, those in the civil station, those in the railway institutes, those in the cantonments?

A. Well, I would not legislate in these matters; I would leave it to the good sense of the people.

Q. And in regard to introducing films in other parts of the Empire, you would also leave that to their good sense?

A. We cannot force these things.

Q. And would you like to be forced yourself? Supposing a sort of quota were fixed of British Empire films to be shown in India compulsorily, would you like it?

A. No, I would not like compulsion in any case. I would leave it to people.

**Q.** Would you like a distinction being made in the matter of customs duty between British Empire films and films produced in other countries?

**A.** Yes, as I said I would give preference to films coming from the Empire. I would expect those countries to give preference to our films.

**Q.** You expect? Now, don't you think if you were to give a sort of preference in the matter of customs duty to British Empire films it would enable those films to compete more successfully with Indian films than the American films, the American films being subjected to a higher duty and the Empire films being subjected to a lower duty? Don't you think the competition would be keener with Empire films than it is now with American films?

**A.** My idea is that if the American films were really good, even if the duty were a little higher, the cinema people would exhibit them.

**Q.** Why do you assume that British films also would not be really good? Let us take really good films on both sides, the really good American film, and the really good British film coming in at a lower rate of duty than the really good American film. Which do you think would have the greater chance of competing with the Indian film industry here?

**A.** I don't know. I suppose in that case the British film which would be cheaper.

**Q.** Therefore your policy would be an impediment in the way of our own indigenous industry?

**A.** I don't think so. On that ground the very fact that films are imported from outside would be an impediment to the Indian industry, if you like to take it from that narrow point of view.

**Q.** But if you are going to make a deliberate distinction between the two and allow a particular country to hit your industry more successfully, don't you increase the difficulties in the way of your industry?

**A.** I don't think so.

**Q.** Even then you would be prepared to make some concession for the sake of your loyalty to the Empire?

**A.** Yes; you might call that loyalty to the Empire if you like.

**Mr. Green:** Are you generally satisfied with the type of story which the foreign films represent?

**A.** No, not quite.

**Q.** What is your objection to them?

**A.** I mean to say there are too many things in some of these pictures that offend the fastidious Indian taste.

**Q.** You mean such as representations of Western methods of courting?

**A.** All that kind of thing. They are misunderstood in India and misinterpreted, and possibly on that account do harm.

**Q.** Apart from that do you find any tendency for the films to lay emphasis on the low side of life rather than, shall we say, the higher side or, at any rate, normal life?

**A.** I mean to say the lower side of normal life is more emphasised than the higher. I would like to see the higher side emphasised at the expense of the lower.

**Q.** Have you any method to suggest how we could achieve that end?

**A.** That is not an easy question to answer. Something of that kind might be done.

**Q.** Do you think we ought to make the censorship stricter?

**A.** Yes.

**Mr. Neogy:** In so far as Western films misrepresent Western life.....

**Chairman:** He did not say that.

**Mr. Neogy:** Do you think the exhibition of those pictures to be a greater evil than bars being attached to cinemas?

A. About bars I have already said I would not abolish them altogether, but I would have them properly supervised and so on. I am not a teetotaler myself, nor do I favour prohibition. I look upon it as a sort of fad.

**\*Oral Evidence of Mr. Y. R. PURI, B.A., B.Sc., A.M.I.S.E., Civil Engineer, on Monday, the 28th November 1927.**

*Chairman:* We are somewhat pressed for time, Mr. Puri, so we must be brief. We have not had the benefit of a written statement from you. You have travelled abroad?

A. I have seen pictures here as well as in England.

Q. And elsewhere?

A. In France, Germany and all over Europe but not in America.

Q. Have you seen any Indian pictures?

A. I saw "The Light of Asia" in England.

Q. What was your impression of the impression it produced on an English audience?

A. I don't think it was very great personally.

Q. Was it a paying proposition?

A. No, I don't think so. Not in England. It went very well in Germany.

Q. How often did you see it?

A. Only once.

Q. What sort of audience was there?

A. Mixed.

Q. I mean was it a big or a small audience?

A. A small audience. The hall is very small and it is not a public place.

Q. Do you know if any attempt was made to secure a better place?

A. Yes, I don't think they could get one being an Indian picture.

Q. Do you speak from personal knowledge or from information?

A. I saw Mr. Himansu Rai, the chief actor in the picture, and I discussed Indian films with him too. I asked him why Indian capital is so shy. He said they had contributed Rs. 20,000 but as the enterprise was absolutely at the starting point the money was lost. There was no return; people got wild and they did not want to subscribe any more towards it.

Q. What I want to know now is how the picture appealed to a British audience?

A. Judging from the audience I do not think it appealed much.

Q. However good an Indian effort may be you think it won't get an audience in England or in Western countries generally.

A. Not in the Empire generally.

*Mr. Neogy:* What about the Continent?

A. I think it will go well in Germany from what Mr. Himansu Rai told me.

Q. Did they try "The Light of Asia" in Germany?

A. Yes, it went well.

*Chairman:* Now, you have seen pictures here in India. How do they compare with the class of pictures you saw in England? I mean do they represent a lower type or as good a type as you see in England?

A. I think we have a better type in India.

Q. You have seen the worst pictures in England?

A. Yes, by the very fact that there are more cinemas in England.

**Q.** So there is bound to be a larger number in requisition—I mean this laying of emphasis on the seamy side of life. Do you think the pictures shown in England are superior to the pictures shown in India?

**A.** No, I don't think so. I think Indian people, Indian men and women are strong enough to choose.....

**Q.** You don't understand my question. I don't want to know about the effect now of the class of pictures shown here. I want you, because you have seen so many pictures in England,—I want to know whether, for instance, sex life is shown in a superior way or a better way in England than in India?

**A.** No, certainly not. I think it is quite the reverse and, if not the reverse, exactly the same.

**Q.** There is not much difference?

**A.** Not much.

**Q.** I mean English audiences tolerate pictures to which objection is taken here?

**A.** Absolutely.

**Q.** For instance, where the same underworld life and the same cabaret life are shown here as in England.

**A.** The same sort of things, the same pictures.

**Q.** Are they shown here in a worse light than in England?

**A.** Talking about cabarets, a cabaret is nothing but a dinner and a dance with a few girls coming before you and dancing.

**Q.** Well, what is the good to India in knowing all that?

**A.** Dancing is nothing bad.

**Q.** You think Indian boys and girls should dance in the same way?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** You think dancing should spread?

**A.** Dancing is a very good form of exercise.

**Q.** So it is as an exercise that you go in for it? Not for merriment?

**A.** There is enjoyment in it too.

**Q.** And do you think boys would dance if it was merely for exercise? Don't you think it is the excitement you get with your arms round a girl partner?

**A.** No, it isn't that. When one is dancing he hardly thinks of excitement. He is dancing to the tune.

**Q.** I know, but do you think it is a welcome thing in Indian life that we should take up these Western ways?

**A.** I should think so, at least as far as dancing is concerned.

**Q.** However, you are a modern youth and you will probably get very few people to agree with you.

**A.** I am positively certain that we Indians, men and women, are strong enough to know what is good for us and what is bad for us.

**Q.** There are some rare exceptions in that line too. All of us are not equally strong. I must confess I am a weak man myself.

**A.** There are weak people also, but, taking the average, I think we are strong enough to distinguish between what is morally good and what is morally bad for us. We don't want to be spoon-fed.

**Q.** Now as you are familiar with these things, I want to know what the facts are. Most of the films in England are American now?

**A.** Yes, at present. Speaking personally I think American films are perfect works of art; the hero always comes out at the top.

**Q.** That American films should have captured the world is testimony enough and your testimony is not going to add to that. Now do you think Indian films have a future before them?

A. In India perhaps, but not outside. As far as the pictures I have seen go, I don't think so.

Q. Even if you produce a good film the subject matter is not likely to appeal to a Western audience, although Western pictures may appeal to us. So just as you are anxious to introduce dancing you are anxious to imitate the West.....

A. No, certainly not in everything, but we can take the good things of the West.

Q. Therefore you would leave things as they are? You don't want any censorship?

A. No, I don't want any censorship because I think we are strong enough without it.

Q. You think the censorship is all right as it is?

A. Yes.

*Colonel Crawford:* What did you think of "The Light of Asia" yourself. How did "The Light of Asia" appeal to you?

A. I did not think much of it as a work of art. There was a good bit of love scenes and so on in it, but I should not call it a first grade picture.

Q. I presume it did not contain exciting or sensational scenes. That was probably the reason why it has not had such a fine reception rather than that it was of Indian manufacture?

A. There was jealousy. There were love scenes and everything in it. There were love affairs and jealousy both, there was also courtship.

Q. It was good enough for a dramatic story?

A. But considered from every point of view, I don't think it could be ranked as one of the best productions. I also don't think that it would find a big market in England or America.

Q. You mean more on account of the quality rather than anything else?

A. Partly because of its being an Indian production and partly also on account of the quality.

*Mr. Neogy:* Are you prepared to accept the statement that the effect of showing a film in England might be different from the effect of showing it in the Punjab?

A. No.

Q. Would there be any difference between cities and rural areas in India?

A. I don't think there is any very great difference.

Q. Do you think that the people inhabiting the rural areas have any conception about western civilization to serve them as a sort of background for these pictures?

A. The majority of them have been to the war, and they know what western life is.

*Chairman:* For how many years have you been away, Mr. Puri?

A. For about 4 years.

Q. You have all along lived in Lahore, I suppose?

A. Yes, I belong to Lahore. I come from Sialkot District. But I live mostly in Lahore.

*Mr. Neogy:* Do you think that the acquaintance of the rural population of the Punjab with western life is so great as not to enable any evil influence being produced on their moral character by the western films?

A. They are strong enough to look after themselves even under grave provocation. Now, speaking about Imperial films, I don't think there can be any such thing as reciprocity because our films won't go abroad.

Q. Supposing the quality were improved, don't you think in that case there might be some chance of securing a market for the Indian films in the world market?

A. If the quality is very good, then we can conceive of a few films finding a market outside India. There are lots of pictures produced in India, but so far only "The Light of Asia" has gone abroad and has got a market, though not very much. Similarly, if a picture is really very good, it might find a world market, but as a regular thing, I am very doubtful if Indian films will find a market outside India at all.

Q. And the market that it may find might not necessarily be confined to the Empire?

A. No. Certainly not.

Q. Did you come across any film in which Indian life was misrepresented?

A. In England particularly they produce the Indian life very badly. I saw one picture in England, and I definitely remember it. I don't know its plot, but there was one picture which was definitely aimed at producing a bad name among the natives of England, it was known as "East of Suez." It gave a very bad colour to oriental life generally, and it was calculated definitely to injure their feeling.

Chairman : What was it that specially struck you?

A. I forget the general plot now.

Q. How was it depicted?

A. The oriental was depicted with his turban and so on.

Mr. Neogy : Was it popular among the audience there?

A. "East of Suez" was a good picture, and I dare say many people there went to see it, and it did produce, so far as I could see, a very harmful effect on them. This is not the only picture of its kind that I saw exhibited in England. There were three other pictures also of a similar character which were shown and which were calculated to produce a harmful effect on the English audience. I really can't say whether they were English or American pictures, but some of them were English too, and they showed a very gross misrepresentation of the whole of the life of the orient.

Chairman : You merely make general statements, and you don't give us the names of these pictures. That won't help us much.

A. I am sorry I don't remember the names of those pictures now.

Mr. Coatsman : Do you think that in producing those pictures, the maker was sinning through ignorance rather than through malice?

A. I should think it was more through malice, because very good care was taken to depict the exact Indian atmosphere and surroundings and the typical mode of Indian life and Indian dress. If they could produce that, they ought to know what the typical Indian life is. They showed the dress of an Indian to the minutest detail, and that shows that they know what Indian life is. Consequently there was a gross misrepresentation of the whole thing, and I object to such misrepresentation very strongly.

Chairman : I suppose you would object to western people being misrepresented here?

A. I have not seen western life being misrepresented here, because every film is true to the life of the westerner.

Mr. Green : If you want to judge your own case and say that you are misrepresented, would you not equally concede to the Englishman to say whether he is being misrepresented here or not?

A. I should go half way. One can be a true representation, and the other is gross misrepresentation. But certainly they can say what is wrong, but they don't seem to take any action.

Mr. Coatsman : I understand that the film "East of Suez" was an American production. Do you remember the captions?

A. I don't remember anything, but I definitely remember that it was clearly calculated to prejudice them. It is a long time since I saw that picture.

*Chairman :* It is very difficult to say whether it was an American picture or not.

A. Yes.

**Written Statement of Dr. E. D. LUCAS, Principal, Forman Christian College, dated the 22nd November 1927.**

*Introductory.*

1. No member of the Staff of this College has any special knowledge or any connection with the Cinematograph Industry either in India or abroad.

*General.*

2. (a) (1) Indians of the educated classes, and in particular College students, attend the cinemas in larger numbers than any other class with the exception of British soldiers in the Army and members of the Anglo-Indian community.

(2) The illiterate classes probably attend in larger numbers than is good either for their finances or their minds, and the attendance of both classes is on the increase. (Our experience is largely confined to the Civil Station area of Lahore).

(b) The average cinema audience here is composed (1) of students in seats at intermediate prices; (2) of rabble from the town in cheapest seats; (3) of soldiers and Anglo-Indians in the intermediate seats; and (4) a large number of the European community when the film is really high grade.

(c) These audiences frequently have a considerable sprinkling of children under 14 years of age.

**PART I.**

3. Most of the popular films seem to be American films, especially those featuring Douglas Fairbanks, Harold Lloyd, Mary Pickford, etc., all quite wholesome.

5. Indian films are not readily available; (a) they are crude and undeveloped in quality; (b) they are popular with class (2) under 2 (2) (b) above; and (c) they are less profitable from the educational standpoint.

6. (a) This is doubtful.

14. Such use of the cinema in schools for adult education would probably be very useful.

16. No. The country has not as yet sufficiently trained producers, directors, etc., and dramatic technique is wanting.

**PART II.**

24. (a) The worst type of films for this country is the kind of spectacle shown in the "Queen of Sheba," "The Loves of Pharaoh," "The Temple of Venus," etc. Even these would be good if the more salacious and undraped sections were censored and eliminated. The actual scenic sections are very often excellent and informative. Pictures portraying the questionable side of modern society life are also to be deprecated.

(b) So long as there is no proper censorship there is certain to be wide circulation of such films, as they distinctly appeal to the average crowd described above.

(d) There is no adequate censorship of sex films and very infrequently crime films (films glorifying train robberies, etc.) appear.

25. To some extent, yes. But there is no reason why the East should not learn in the film about Western customs in general.

26. (a) Yes.



27. (a) The wrong films do misrepresent Western civilization and are probably misunderstood by the uneducated and even in some cases by educated Indians.

29. No. Such films should not be shown at all.

30. Yes. The age of 14 seems to be reasonable.

31. (a) Yes, if censorship is free from political influences and conducted by the proper people.

**Oral Evidence of Dr. E. D. LUCAS, Principal, Forman Christian College, Lahore, on Monday, the 28th November 1927.**

*Chairman:* You are the Principal of the Forman Christian College, Lahore?

A. Yes.

Q. How long have you been in Lahore?

A. For over 19 years.

Q. Do you know the interior of the Punjab, I mean the villages?

A. Yes, fairly well. Do you mean the rural population? Yes, to some extent.

Q. I suppose your experience is confined to Lahore so far as cinemas are concerned?

A. Largely yes. I have seen cinemas in other cities as well.

Q. You mean in other cities in the Punjab?

A. No, not in the Punjab.

Q. Now, we want your view as an educationist. Do you think there is any demoralising effect by the cinema on your students?

A. It is very difficult to answer, yes or no. Of course, students can take harm from most things if there is excess.

Q. You mean it depends upon their proclivities?

A. Yes.

Q. On the whole you believe in the cinema as a mindopener?

A. Yes, it is educative.

Q. It is a very good instrument for spreading education and knowledge of various kinds?

A. Yes. It combines both education and entertainment.—I don't mean education in the limited sense of school education. It also widens the outlook of people.

Q. Do you consider that the censorship which prevails at present is adequate?

A. I don't think so.

Q. In what respect do you think it should be stricter?

A. There are certain spectacular films like "The Fall of Pompeii" and "The Queen of Sheba" which I think are very harmful, where men and women appear half naked or two-third naked. They also show some drinking and other scenes, and all these have a bad effect on the minds of our youth. But it must be admitted that some of the scenes are very well done, I mean the featuring and scenic effects.

Q. You think there is too much emphasis laid on sex films?

A. Now and then perhaps there is a fair amount of it. But I have no way of telling what percentage of the films are of that kind, but I think they are shown once or twice a month during the academic year.

Q. I suppose a certain amount of woman on the screen is necessary to make the play attractive, is it not?

A. Yes, there is nothing harmful about a woman.

Q. There can be no novel without a woman, is it not?

A. Yes.

Q. Of course, it is very difficult to decide as there are two opinions on the point. Some people take too puritanic a view while others take a different view?

A. I think most Indian boys know too much too early.

Q. Do you mean on account of early marriages?

A. And also on account of the freedom with which people live in joint families and the general talk. I don't think there is very much concealment of sex matters in the joint family system.

Q. I think you are wrong there. I don't think there is any talk about sex matters in the joint family system.

A. If you are talking about the wealthy and the educated people, it is true, but if you are talking of the poorer and middle classes, I think they know a great deal more about sex matters at a very early age.

Q. You mean the crowded life and conditions of life?

A. Yes.

Q. What is your remedy for it?

A. I think a certain type of films might be more closely censored, and even some of the society or sex films might be debarred or proscribed.

Q. The worst of such films the censors do censor, but you consider that some slip through and those should be proscribed?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you suggest then that those films which deal with social life and lay emphasis on sexual aspects should be censored by the members of the Board themselves and not by any paid officer of the Board?

A. Do you mean provincial Boards?

Q. Take the Bombay Board. There the usual practice is for an officer of the Board to see these films, and if he has any doubt about any particular film, he refers it to the whole Board. Would you say that such films which show social life on the screen should be examined by two or more members of the Board in the first instance?

A. I know very little about that side, but it seems to me that if you had a Central Board, then all the members could see a particular play before it is screened, and it might be possible for them to see almost every film.

Q. But perhaps you don't realise the amount of work that would entail on the members?

A. They will have to be whole time paid officers.

Q. And one Board for the whole of India means delay in the trade; there is a rush for exhibiting films?

A. I suppose most films enter through Bombay or Calcutta, and there should be a Board in each place.

Q. Now, in view of your desire for stricter censorship, I want to know whether you think, if a film is inspected by at least two members of the Board, that will be a sufficient safeguard?

A. It is a difficult question for me to answer. Because a play might be suitable for people who are of a certain class in Calcutta. I mean society people who are accustomed to social life in Calcutta might consider a social play or drama quite all right, but people in Peshawar or in other backward tracts where Muhammadan sentiment is strong might object to it. In such places the attitude towards woman is entirely different. So it is very difficult to arrive at any general conclusion. I have seen on one or two occasions in Lahore student audiences taking great delight in the spicy parts, I mean the sex parts of a film. I don't think it was anything very harmful, but there was a lot of shouting and Ah-Ahing.

**Q.** Does it not happen in England?

**A.** It does happen everywhere. But if things are taken beyond a certain point, they are objectionable and harmful.

**Q.** Do you think there is much evidence of immoral or filthy taste among the student population or any degeneracy of that kind? I mean in indulging in filthy talk as a result of the cinema?

**A.** I don't think the cinema is particularly responsible for it.

**Q.** That is the general trend of modern thought. Probably novels are more mischievous than some of the filthy stuff that is shown on the screen?

**A.** Yes, to a great extent, but I don't think the cinema by itself is responsible for it.

**Q.** We find it very difficult to make up our minds on the point, because there are two schools of thought. Do you advocate separate shows for children?

**A.** Yes, I should like children to be shown films like "Peter Pan" or "Robin Hood," but I don't believe that the other plays are good for children under 12 years of age.

**Q.** Would you leave it to the parents or do you would want a special classification of films for children?

**A.** I don't believe in classification.

**Q.** If the parents don't take care, what are we to do? Sometimes they take the children with them to see the cinema?

**A.** I don't believe it would do much good if you mark certain films as for adults only, but there might be occasional shows specially for children, and the parents can take them to such shows. Occasionally you can have harmless scenes like comics and so forth, and children can safely be taken to such shows. I would not, of course, advocate any legislation being undertaken to prevent children from going to a place in general because you would be interfering with the liberty of parents, and it is also difficult to decide the age of children. But I think both in America and here too many children go to plays, but that is a matter of individual opinion. I think it harmful to the eyes, a great deal of it, and it forms into a habit. I know certain schools in America where they won't admit children unless they get a promise from the parent that the child won't attend cinemas during the school term. It cuts into their work so much. There are points of view from which you could exclude children but legislation is very difficult. After you have got a law you have got to obey it.

**Q.** And it is still more difficult to enforce it.

*Colonel Crawford:* I gather from what you say that you are an American?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** What class of students have you got in your school?

**A.** College students.

**Q.** I mean from what class of the community?

**A.** Well, in the post matriculation class, through the post-graduate M.A. and M.Sc., their ages—they have recently taken away the age restriction from the matriculation examination,—so we get boys now of 15, an occasional boy of 14, but the average age is from 16 to 22 and 23. They are from the professional classes, Government services and well-to-do middle classes.

**Q.** An impressionable age?

**A.** A very impressionable age.

**Q.** And you don't gather that there is any harmful tendency from the cinema—I mean from their talk?

**A.** The thing is this, I see that the city life of Lahore is being influenced very much by the west in every respect. The cinema is only one part of this influence. If you shut up the cinema, they would go to some other form of life that might not be any better. They are going to get amusement in some form or other. They go to the cinema for amusement largely, for

relaxation after the day's work. The decent part of the students who form over half of them, I should say well over half, don't get any harm from the cinema. The smaller percentage pick out the worst type of film and go there in groups and I think it does their morals no good, probably harm. But these men 20 years ago were going to the bazar where there were prostitutes. I suppose they are no better or worse off than they were 20 years ago. In some respects we may take it that side of the thing does them less harm than when they were going to the bazars 20 years ago. I don't think that by itself it has a demoralising influence except in so far as it forms a habit like any other habit. Students get to going, become lazy and waste their time and money and get certain extravagant or immoral tastes, tastes, that are not the best, from the worst types of films.

*Q.* Now I take it that you do not consider the stories given up by producers are all that we want yet. They are inclined to overemphasise possibly the shady side of life?

*A.* Yes, you get all types, there are some sex films; there are very few crime films that I have seen here or heard of that emphasise crime, which make a hero of the villain. But the society problem with the divorce, or the woman selling herself for riches, marrying some man just for what she can get out of it, and high life in New York and Paris and London restaurants, cabarets, —I think that gives an idea of western life which for the average Indian who has not been to the west, distorts life for him and some of them get the idea: well, this is the thing to do, this is western life. Freedom means this. I think in that way it is harmful. But the balance is steadily being restored in a way in that India is getting so closely in touch with the west, through literature, travel and discussion and so on, that I think they are able to discriminate far better than they were five years ago. And they get what they are after. That is the point I am after; that they are getting what they are after. And you cannot prevent that by legislation. In America the trouble with the Prohibition Act is that if the people are going after whisky they will get it. You cannot prevent it by law. You can prevent a lot of people getting it, but you can't prevent all.

*Q.* But supposing that particular types of pictures which you feel do no good were excluded, do you think the producer would give us a different type of story?

*A.* Well, he wants the crowd doesn't he?

*Q.* He wants the money?

*A.* And he is not particular about the means employed, and if he finds the audience dropping off he will introduce it indirectly if he can. It will take a very wise censorship and a very impartial censorship to discriminate. Certain things are manifestly bad. If the intention of the producer is to degrade and debase, I think he is very successful in doing it. But if the intention of the producer is to have a clean play on the whole with certain scenes which are as life is or was, with no intention to debase or degrade, there is where your question arises as to whether to rule that out or not. I am doubtful myself. I think, unless it goes pretty far, it must be left in. But if there is a great deal of the nude and revelling, well, it should be cut out. But it is hard to draw the line.

*Q.* I gather you are not quite satisfied with the position as it is to-day?

*A.* No, there are certain films that are certainly questionable and probably harmful.

*Mr. Green:* Only one question arising out of Colonel Crawford's question really. The censors in India may cut out the type of film to which Colonel Crawford has been referring. But would the loss of the Indian market effect your own country which supplies most of the films to the world? We understand that great profits in the industry are made in America itself. So, will action of that nature in a country where there are only 350 cinemas, some of them not operating, have any serious effect in inducing American producers to give us a different kind of film?

A. Do you mean to say, if the questionable sort of film were ruled out, whether that would affect the number of American films coming?

Q. No, whether it would help us to get from America better films. You told us naturally the producer looks to his box office receipts. Must not the revulsion of feeling, if there is any, start in the chief American market, in America itself? That is, a higher type of film being demanded by the American market itself?

A. Here I do not speak as an expert, but I believe the tendency has been to produce a better type of film artistically and in every way. Of course if it is better artistically it is better morally. You cannot separate the two.

Q. You do believe there is a definite improvement?

A. So far as I know I think there is.

*Colonel Crawford* : Have you been to America recently?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you think the type of film they show now is of a higher standard than we see in India? Are we getting old films?

A. Oh, yes. The films that come out east are generally two or three years old.

Q. Then if there is a revulsion of feeling in America we would not get to know of it yet?

A. These films that come out are two or three years old. There was a play in New York that ran the whole winter of 1925-26—"Ben Hur." It is just coming.

Q. It is being shown in Calcutta now. It is moving about India now.

A. It had a tremendous run. A good film will have a big house in America. I think the theatre in America is much worse than the film.

Q. I gather from what you say that America is producing quite a lot of good stories now, probably as a result of a revulsion of feeling?

A. The cinema goes all over America and has to cater to a general public opinion whereas the theatre is local as, for example, New York and especially Broadway and can cater to certain types of persons there.

*Mr. Neogy* : Just one question. You are aware, Doctor, of the existence of the bars in these cinema theatres?

A. Yes.

Q. Would you say anything about them?

A. Well, I believe there is one bar here in one theatre which is probably objectionable because it has probably a cinema, a bar and, probably, a house of ill fame all tied together and that undoubtedly is a bad combination.

Q. Where is this?

A. It is one of the cinemas here.

Q. In the civil lines?

A. Yes. That is what I have understood. You cannot get definite information on it. But the probability is that the three things are tied up together. And certainly from that point of view I think the bar is very bad. But I have never seen any intoxicated people around the Empire or the Elphinstone or the Excelsior. Those are a better type of theatre.

Q. Don't the students go to those theatres also?

A. Yes, they do. I have never seen students drinking. They may drink.

*Chairman* : I hope not.

*Mr. Neogy* : So the bar is a temptation, even worse than some of the bad films?

A. They are in the same class. It leads to intemperance.

*Mr. Coatman* : When you were on leave in America did you see anything of the use of specifically educational films in high schools and colleges and so on?

A. No, I didn't see them but I know they are used to a certain extent.

Q. To a great extent, do you think?

A. I cannot answer that. Wherever they use educational films, of course they are entirely free. They cannot charge for them. The department of agriculture uses films for popularising newer methods of cultivation and new crops and so the best kind of grain and the use of machinery and so on

*Chairman* : Can you tell us who produce those films?

A. I believe that the department of agriculture do it themselves.

*Mr. Coatsman* : Is that federal or state?

A. Federal.

Q. And do any other departments do that?

A. I have never heard of any other department. The department of agriculture covers a good deal of ground. They have highways, and I am not sure that public health is not under them—it is under the bureau of labour, which may be either under commerce or agriculture. Then one of the departments, the bureau of labour and health have a good deal to do with the whole question of sanitation and the various health exhibits, and films of that nature. There is one interesting development. The history department of Yale University assisted the Government or there was mutual assistance in producing certain historical films going away back to the early colonial days and trying to reproduce the life of those times, and as it was quite sure that they would not be a commercial success they were aided to some extent by Yale University and by one of the government departments.

Q. And you think the agricultural department produce these films themselves?

A. I think so.

Q. They have their own camera man and so on?

A. Yes. I think they have certain films produced in that way.

Q. I suppose you have never used films in your college?

A. The physics department have used certain projectroscope apparatus but I don't know that we have used the actual movie. We have used a great deal of illustration. But it is mostly just projecting scene after scene. But Dr. Compton who was here as university lecturer about a year ago used a small machine of his own to show trips he made to Kashmir and other places for scientific and other purposes.

Q. Did he show it here?

A. Yes.

Q. Have you ever considered using films in your college?—whether foreign produced or made here? Has it ever occurred to you?

A. It is too expensive. It is not worth doing unless it is worth doing well and it is a terrible expense. I have had just a little experience, trying to show certain films that a friend of mine made here in the college, and I used them in America. It nearly bankrupted me to do it.

Q. But provided you can get the money do you think it would be a good thing?

A. I think commercial companies generally go in for anything that will draw a popular audience, and can beat us at that game. If it is purely instructional it is a question of the difference between the cost and the amount of instruction gained, and there it has to be done very well and by experts and it will be costly and unless it were used for a wide area it would not pay.

Q. That is really what I want to get at. In the present state of affairs any money you have you think could be used to better purpose elsewhere?

A. Yes.

*Chairman* : There is one point I want to ask you about. In America you say there is a tendency to improve the tone of the film. Is that due to public opinion there?

A. Yes, general public opinion. There are areas that would like to have the worst types of films; New York city might open her house to any type of film, but the country at large would not stand for that.

Q. So that public opinion is asserting itself in favour of improving the tone?

A. It has improved the tone.

**Written Statement of Mr. G. R. SETHI, Journalist, Amritsar, dated the 24th November 1927.**

1. I have no special connection with the Cinematograph Industry but I have some knowledge about it.

2. I have experience of the cinema-going people in Amritsar where the illiterate spectators far outnumber the educated ones. During the last five years the number has been rapidly on the increase. The spectators every evening do not exceed 2,000 or 2,500 at the most and I do not think more than 7½ per cent. of the people of Amritsar visit the cinema. This percentage may be less, say, up to 5 per cent. But a wider publicity given to the films has created an interest among ten per cent. of the male population. I do not think more than one per cent. of the Indian women in Amritsar know anything about cinema shows. The percentage of children from 7 to 15 may be a little higher, but, say, up to 10 per cent. is a fair estimate. But the number of children residing in distant localities from the Cinema buildings may be much less.

3. American films containing thrills, sensational developments, remarkable stunts are fairly popular among the Indian audiences. Religious pictures with vivid scenes are liked by the Hindu population, but my experience of the cinema-going people in Amritsar is that most of the visitors are Moham-medans, who are to a greater extent regular customers of the cinema. Highly educative or instructional films do not find favour with the illiterate masses.

4. I do not know anything about this.

5. No, Indian films depicting Indian life are not readily available.

(a) Barring a few productions of Messrs. Madan Theatres Limited, the Krishna Film Company of Bombay and some Mahratta companies, who have produced a very limited number of good films, Indian productions are not easily obtainable. They are not very popular as compared with the American productions. Generally it is less profitable to show Indian films; but some of the good films that have attracted larger Indian audiences are Madan's "Toorki Hoor," "Pati Bhakti" and some religious pictures of Bombay companies, whose names I forget.

6. Films of Indian life, depicting stories from the national literature, history and mythology are popular, but not to the extent of the Western films. Owing to the charm that the western films have created here, by the variety of character, customs and manners, it will be difficult for the Indian films to replace the Western ones all at once; but about 5 to 10 per cent. may be tolerated in the beginning.

(b) (1) Films from National literature, history and current Indian news will certainly be welcomed by the educated classes;

(2) while Mythology will appeal to the illiterate population.

(c) I have no knowledge on this point.

(8) Production, distribution and exhibition are wholly unsatisfactory and not properly organised. Most of the capitalists do not seriously consider it as an industry and do not take any risks of investments in this direction. I would suggest the promotion of joint stock and co-operative organisation for the development of the film industry. In the beginning Government will

have to materially assist such organisation even by making large financial contributions.

14. Certainly, yes. There is a growing demand for such films, but, owing to the extraordinarily high prices, the departments concerned are greatly handicapped. The Rural Community Council, of which I am a member, had outlined a programme of conducting their propaganda in the rural areas by means of educative films, but the item had to be dropped on account of the prohibitive cost of obtaining films.

15. Conditions in this country are by no means unfavourable.

16. Producers, actors, scenario writers are no doubt available in this country, though there is a paucity of good actresses, but with the development of the Industry, I think it will not be difficult to obtain such actresses. There is a deficiency of technical knowledge in almost all of them and that is mostly due to the fact that there is no encouragement to their knowledge. When the industry is started on a sound footing, I think people of fairly good technical knowledge can be tempted to take up these lines. To make up the deficiency I would suggest special training of these youths under experts either here or abroad. Those desirous could be sent out on scholarships by the Government or the industrialists concerned.

17. I do not reckon that sufficient capital is or will be forthcoming in the near future, unless the Government breaks the ice by bringing home to the capitalists that their money will be safe.

18. Whether by legislative or administrative action, Government could considerably aid the industry by actually financing it and by appointing film specialists in the provinces, who could give every kind of technical advice to the intending capitalists and could also help in promoting such joint stock companies.

21. I have practically given my answer to this question in the above note. State agency to create a monopoly may not be very useful to the development of the film industry.

22. There is no harm in her doing so.

23. To a great extent these methods can be very useful. That could only be done by the various Governments arranging some percentage of the Empire films being exhibited in every country participating in this convention. The Governments will have to arrange for obtaining such films at their own cost. For instance, the film recently taken by the Punjab Co-operative Department about the working of the Co-operative movement in this province could be usefully exhibited in the other countries.

## PART II.

24. Certain American films showing scenes of kissing and embracing have a demoralising effect on the children and the illiterate masses, but I do not think that this tendency is general among the American films. People in this country are gradually realising that these American films correspond with the customs of the country. In my opinion such films do not go to deprave public morals or do not even help to alter the customs in this country.

I do not think there is any increase in crime due to the cinema. It appears that habitual criminals are adopting some of the modern innovations in conducting their campaigns of lawlessness, particularly in the abduction of women. I remember having come across two very interesting cases reported in recent years in which such criminals came on horse-back and after abducting the woman, quietly ran away on horse-back. Such crimes have also been committed by means of motor lorries and motor cars. Though the idea is suggested by the American films, I do not think that with the progress of the motor traffic in recent years the criminal would have left out such important devices. The increased use of fire-arms in such crimes reported in recent years is perhaps indicative of the influence of the cinema on crime. But I do not attach very great importance to this, since, as far as I know,



such an influence is hardly one per cent. With the facilities in the means of communication and with the growth of education it is but natural that the criminal should also adopt refined methods to perpetrate his crime.

26. I think particular care is already being taken in censoring such films. During recent years very few films have been objected to on purely religious grounds, as far as the Punjab is concerned. In Amritsar itself such objections were raised on three occasions during the past four years. But these objections were not pressed by the party concerned when their leaders were actually satisfied. I, however, understand that on certain objections, Messrs. Madan Theatres Limited had taken out certain portions from the well known film of "Turki Hoor."

27. Owing to such a great difference between the Western and Eastern customs, certain American films have a tendency to lower the Western civilisation in the eyes of the Eastern population, though to a very small degree, owing to the fact that most of the illiterate masses do not know that such customs are permitted in Western Society.

28. Films containing kissing, embracing and certain methods of theft have tendency to produce an adverse effect on children only.

29. But I am not in favour of films being certified as intended "FOR ADULTS ONLY." Most of the children accompany their parents and any restrictions of the kind may lend further and perhaps greater inducement to children to see such films.

30. I doubt very much if cinema magnates in this country will be able to arrange special children's performances. But as not a very large percentage of children visits these shows, I do not think any such restrictions are called for.

31. Censorship is certainly an effective method of guarding against misuse of the film.

32. I think the present censorship is fairly satisfactory.

33 and 34. I am not very much in favour of stricter censorship. There is no necessity for Provincial Boards, if the censorship at Bombay and Calcutta is fairly responsible, at which places I would prefer the Central Board for the present, since both of those Presidencies are devoting attention to the development of the film Industry. Such a Board should be financed by the Government.

35. (b) I would prefer a whole-time experienced well-paid Officer at the Centre to be assisted by an Advisory Board of Non-Officials.

36. Mere Police Inspectors are not quite suited for censorship. I would suggest a strong Advisory Board of persons interested in the education of children, and others connected with the detection of crime with some eminent public men interested in social reform.

(b) I think so.

37. The District Magistrate should be empowered to stop the exhibition of films against which there are any serious objections. But he should personally satisfy himself whether those objections are genuine, since it has come to my knowledge that some times public leaders of lesser importance or, say, some of the local leaders at places raise objections simply because they have not been offered complimentary passes.

40. I do not think any such thing is necessary. To my knowledge such posters have not been found objectionable.

41 and 42. Yes.

44. To a very great extent. Such public bodies and the press could bring home to the people the good points in a film, which ordinarily may not evoke such interest on account of the lack of sensational plots or mysteries.

46. I should think that the form suggested is quite suitable.

**Oral Evidence of Mr. G. R. SETHI, Journalist, Amritsar, on  
Monday, the 28th November 1927.**

*Chairman:* You come from Amritsar?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* You live in Amritsar?

*A.* Yes. I belong to Amritsar. I was born there.

*Q.* You don't think more than 7½ per cent. of the Amritsar people visit the cinema?

*A.* I don't think so.

*Q.* You mean to say the people who attend the cinemas are they more or less the same sort of people or new people?

*A.* More or less the same people.

*Q.* Do many of the students go there?

*A.* Say about one per cent.

*Q.* One per cent. of the students?

*A.* No, one per cent. of the cinema going population.

*Q.* What percentage of the students do you think go to the cinema?

*A.* Well, say about 10 per cent. of the students.

*Q.* Do you think they acquire the cinema habit—the students?

*A.* No, I don't think that the cinema habit has so much developed among the students.

*Q.* Has the cinema to your knowledge any bad influence on the people who go there?

*A.* Well, I don't think so, not to a great extent. It is more or less exaggerated, the idea that the cinema has really a bad effect on people.

*Q.* You don't think it has any?

*A.* No, I don't think so.

*Q.* I suppose you frequently go to the cinema as a pressman?

*A.* Not only as a pressman. I am particularly interested in films.

*Q.* Do you speak to the audience? Do you on occasions sit with the cinema audience or do you get a special box?

*A.* I generally get a box, but I mix with the audience very often.

*Q.* Do you hear their talk? And do you think they get affected?

*A.* Well, I have occasion to hear their remarks, not really consistent conversation but, now and then, remarks thrown here and there.

*Q.* Do the young men show any tendency to develop desultory talk?

*A.* Well, the class of people that patronise these cinemas in Amritsar is generally Muhammadans of a low class and they already indulge in foul talk even outside and it is but natural that when they see these things sometimes—things which to them seem queer—they naturally pass some bad remarks.

*Q.* But I mean have you heard such remarks?

*A.* Oh, yes.

*Q.* But that applies, I suppose, whether it is an Indian show or a western show?

*A.* Well, I think that applies to both the western and Indian shows.

*Q.* Which is more popular among the people of Amritsar, the Indian show or the western show?

*A.* Well, the western is more popular with the Amritsar people, because people like thrills and sensational things, whereas Indian films are generally devoid of these sensational plots.

*Q.* But yesterday they had a very good western show and a very poor eastern show.

A. That was the last day of the show: they had run it for 9 previous nights—"The Birth of a Nation".

Q. It didn't attract the audience.

A. It had attracted a good audience at the beginning.

Q. The audience seemed asleep—I didn't hear a single cheer, whereas in the Indian show I heard a lot of cheering.

A. That particular film was not very sensational. You cannot compare it with films like "The Thief of Bagdad".

Q. It was a very good picture.

A. Yes, as a picture. But the plot was not so intelligible.

Q. You think that people follow the plot in western shows?

A. Oh yes, they do. There are four things they hang on to—they pick out the hero, and the heroine in the film, and then the mischievous party, and then the point under contention, whether there is a mystery to be solved or some treasure to be discovered or something of the kind.

Q. You don't think the cinema then has any bad effect upon the people of Amritsar?

A. Not much, I don't think.

Q. Has it any bad effect?

A. Not to my knowledge.

Q. Do you think the censorship is adequate as it is?

A. Well, in so far as certain films had to be declared uncertified locally at Delhi and Lahore, it would appear that it is not quite adequate. Because I have not seen those films that were declared uncertified later and I cannot say whether it is adequate or not.

Q. No, it is not a question of the certificate being cancelled. It is a question of your opinion of the effect of the cinema. Do you think the cinema sufficiently safeguards public interest?

A. Well, in my opinion it does.

Q. Do you think the Indian pictures are gaining popularity?

A. Oh! yes, they are. Those pertaining to mythology and historical literature.

Q. I notice that some frivolous objections are taken sometimes by one party or another against a particular film.

A. Well, I remember particularly two or three instances in Amritsar. There were certain films which depicted the character of a Sultan and certain Muhammadans objected to that. We actually invited six Muhammadan leaders in order to prevent any trouble in case this should be the cause of further trouble, and they found nothing objectionable in those parts. I think the leaders themselves saw no objection. Some people got excited because it was depicting the harem of a Sultan and a harem is held to be very sacred amongst the Muhammadans, and they did not like that to be exhibited. When the leaders gave their consent, they withdrew their objection.

Q. You think sometimes frivolous objections are likely to be taken in these matters?

A. Particularly when you depict the Muhammadan religion. Because Muhammadans don't believe in the display of mythology whereas Hindus do not object to these things.

Q. This was raised by Indian films?

A. No, western films. Only once objection was taken to an Indian film—in the case of "Turki Hoor", and when the leaders were shown that there was nothing objectionable, the objection was withdrawn. They objected because the character of the Sultan was that of a drunkard or debauched man. When they were satisfied that it was only an imaginary thing, they withdrew their objection.

Q. That is the only occasion you remember about an Indian film?

**A. Yes.**

*Q.* Are you in favour of organising children's shows specially?

**A.** Well, certainly, if the children could be attracted. But I don't think the cinema proprietors will welcome that. Because their experience is that they don't get a large number of children. On occasions when showing religious films they have arranged for special ladies' shows for purdah women, but they have not been a very successful.

*Q.* I suppose women very seldom go to the cinema—Indian women?

**A.** Quite so.

*Q.* There are only two cinemas in Amritsar now?

**A.** Yes.

*Q.* The third was closed down because it was not a paying concern?

**A.** Yes.

*Q.* Have you got any bars attached to these cinemas?

**A.** No, not in Amritsar. There was some proposal three years ago but it was objected to by the Temperance Society and they dropped the idea.

*Mr. Contman:* Just one point. You mentioned that you are a member of the Rural Community Council. What exactly is that?

**A.** The Rural Community Council is a body of prominent people from the district to draft schemes for the uplift of the rural population.

*Q.* What does it do.

**A.** Well, it has to carry on educational propaganda through members of the district boards and other people interested.

*Q.* Are they nominated or elected?

**A.** They are generally nominated by the District Inspector in consultation with the Deputy Commissioner or the president of the district board.

*Q.* Are all the members nominated?

**A.** Yes.

*Q.* There is no election for it?

**A.** No.

*Q.* How long has it been in existence?

**A.** From 1926.

*Q.* Is it a very big body?

**A.** It has a membership of about 50. We meet once a month.

*Q.* You have already met?

**A.** Yes.

*Q.* What do you do at the meeting?

**A.** We consider schemes for the spread of education in villages.

*Q.* Has the Rural Community Council ever considered this specific question?

**A.** It was considered at the October meeting as well as at the November meeting. We had a sub-committee and I was on that sub-committee also. The Council had a mind to purchase a separate set of projector and a motor car and to take it round the villages. The scheme was rather costly and we had to give it up. We get a grant from the Government of about Rs. 500 a year and that is wholly insufficient for the purpose.

*Q.* Apart from having your own motor and travelling show, have you made any other suggestion? I was given to understand that the Provincial Rural Community Board had a motor of that kind of their own and they were sending it to the various districts for that purpose?

**A.** We passed a resolution that we might request the Central Board to lend us their car for a month or so, so that we might take that round in our district.

*Q.* Apart from that have you given any thought to the wider question of the use of the film generally in education or sanitation?

*A.* The Education Department realises very well.....

*Q.* I was talking of the Rural Community Council.

*A.* These proposals were actually put forward by the District Inspector of Schools that films could be used as a medium.....

*Q.* Which?

*A.* Amritsar.

*Q.* Each district has a Rural Community Council?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Anything that the Rural Community Council does will have to be done in its own district?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Have you got a Provincial Community Council?

*A.* The provincial body is separate.

*Q.* You are not a member of that?

*A.* No.

*Mr. Green:* I understood you to say that in Amritsar the Indian films are not as popular as the western?

*A.* There are very few Indian films.

*Q.* We saw a film last night which seemed to be extremely popular.

*A.* Because that was the first night of the show. Generally those people who go to the cinema, go to the cinema whether the show is Indian or western.

*Q.* That had been on for a week.

*A.* That had been on for three days.

*Q.* You have told us that the majority of the audience in Amritsar is Muhammadan?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Most of the Indian film producing companies cater prominently for Hindus?

*A.* They generally produce religious pictures which are visited by Hindus in large numbers.

*Q.* Those, I understand, would not appeal to Muhammadans?

*A.* No, not much.

*Q.* Do you think that films of the kind which was shown last night would be less popular than western films?

*A.* They would be more popular than those, provided the photography is good and the titles are intelligible to the people. Last night the titles were not intelligible to the people.

*Chairman:* The people there read the titles and they ejaculated like anything.

*A.* It was not very clear.

*Mr. Green:* It is a question of technique. If Indian companies could produce films of universal appeal, they would probably be more popular than western films?

*A.* Certainly.

*Q.* And what the popular audiences want is a story which they can understand?

*A.* Yes.

**Oral Evidence of Dr. GOKUL CHAND NARANG, M.A., Ph.D.,  
M.L.C., Bar-at-Law, on Monday, the 28th November 1927.**

*Chairman:* You take keen interest in public affairs generally?

*A.* Yes, generally.

**Q.** Do you go to the cinema often?

**A.** Once or twice a month, not very often.

**Q.** What is your opinion regarding the effect of the cinema on the public? Do you think it has any pernicious influence?

**A.** It all depends on the nature of the films. Some of the films certainly have a pernicious effect.

**Q.** Do you think any harm is being produced in the country in the minds of either the young students or any other class of the public?

**A.** I think some films certainly produce a harmful effect upon all sections of the public, and particularly the young men, and more particularly the student class which form very often the majority of the audience. By far the largest portion of the audience are students.

**Q.** Is it more in connection with the showing of women in a state of semi-nudity?

**A.** That is the principal thing, no doubt. It is not in keeping with Indian habits and customs, and therefore I think it produces an injurious effect on the minds of the young students. Then there are some scenes in some of the dramas which are more or less of prurient character, and they have an injurious effect.

**Q.** You would cut them off in the interests of the country?

**A.** Such films or such scenes, if they could be cut off without detriment to the rest of the film.

**Q.** If you avoid such scenes or such films, the cinema trade might suffer, have you thought over it?

**A.** It may suffer, but it will be a sacrifice well worth making.

**Q.** I suppose you believe in the cinema as a potent factor.....

**A.** I believe in the utility of the cinema for various purposes. Even as a source of entertainment, not merely for educational purposes, the cinema is a potent factor.

**Q.** And especially in the case of the poor, it is the only amusement they get?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** In that sense you want to keep up the cinema?

**A.** Yes. I do not like to abolish the cinema. I would like to improve it and reform it.

**Q.** Therefore you would be very interested in producing more Indian films which would be attractive to the Indian people?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** That would be a method of getting rid of the evil which you think of?

**A.** Yes, to a certain extent.

**Q.** At the same time you think that western films require stricter censorship?

**A.** Yes. In fact, I sent up a resolution to the Council for further censorship of the films, but unfortunately it was not ballotted, and in the meantime the Deputy Commissioner, Mr. Emerson, told me that he had cut out certain portions of certain films which were considered to be objectionable.

**Q.** The difficulty is this. Very leading people here from your own town told us this morning it has no pernicious effect at all, and, if at all, it is negligible and no drastic action is needed.

**A.** I do not know if they are frequenters of the cinema and how many films they have seen. I must have seen at least a 100 films.

**Q.** So the general impression left on your mind is....

**A.** That many scenes had better been left out.

**Q.** I know there are several people who are in agreement with you also, great people.

A. I am glad to hear that. Whenever a scene of an exciting character, exciting to the Indian mind, is exhibited on the screen, we hear shouts and cries, thereby indicating that people were excited over it. It was making an appeal to their passions more or less.

Q. You think it is a danger which the nation should try to avoid?

A. Yes.

Q. You do not think, looking at it from the point of view that it lowers the westerner in the eyes of the eastern.....

A. I do not think it misrepresents the westerner. Probably it is a true presentation of the western life, but the Indian people do not understand western life, and what is quite an ordinary thing in the west may be considered to be very objectionable here.

Q. You have travelled in the west?

A. I was in England for three years. I have passed through France and lived in Switzerland. I have been to Germany too, I passed a month there.

Q. You think therefore that there should be a different standard of censorship adopted here from what is adopted in England?

A. Yes. In France, for instance, I saw something and I heard something that it is not a very heinous thing at all for a woman to appear on the stage in a more or less nude condition, but that would be considered horrible in this country.

Q. Although it may be true to life in the west you would not have it here?

A. No. I do not think these cinemas do any injustice to the west so far as I know, but it certainly lowers the west in the eyes of the Indians, whether they are educated or uneducated, because the standards are different.

Q. On the one hand, there is the risk to the trade, and on the other there is the risk to the people of the country. To which would you attach greater importance?

A. I would obviously attach greater importance to the morality of the country. I do not care for the trade so much. If there is a 10 per cent. or a 20 per cent. reduction in the profits of the cinema.....

Q. It is not a question of profits.

A. Ultimately it resolves itself into one of profit. Whether it is the profit of the film makers, or the distributors, or the film exhibitors, or other people who are the shareholders in a cinema company, it ultimately resolves itself into a question of profit.....

Q. The other day a young man,—he is not very young, he is about 30 or 32,—told us he did not believe in these old people coming and complaining in a puritanic way that the cinema does harm to the people. I do not think you are an old man and as such.....

A. I am not a very old man. I hope I am quite young.

Q. You think your view is shared generally in the town?

A. I think the sober opinion is that these cinemas do a little bit of injury.

Q. And a little more tightening up of the censorship is needed?

A. Yes.

Q. And it is better to nip it in the bud?

A. Yes. Otherwise there is no reason why even more, from the Indian point of view, scandalous scenes should not be exhibited on the screen.

Q. When was this that you moved a resolution?

A. I think it was about two years ago. After that I found that there was some improvement, and also Mr. Emerson, the then Deputy Commissioner, told me that he had an eye on the thing and that he had actually cut out some scenes.

Q. He has not power to cut out.

A. That is what he told me. I do not know whether he exercised that power. As a District Magistrate I believe he can disallow.

Q. He can only suspend and report.

A. Probably there was a compromise.

Q. When the Deputy Commissioner puts his foot down the exhibitor agrees to it?

A. Yes.

Q. Therefore you think that the development of the Indian film industry should be encouraged?

A. Yes.

Q. And you are for Government giving aid in some form or other for that?

A. Yes. I think Government could give aid in two ways. If a limited company is floated for the film industry, the Government could buy some shares, of course, with proper safeguards, having a director of their own on the company, or it can buy films from that company or just enter into a contract.....

Q. You mean educational films and public utility films?

A. Yes.

Q. You think that some scholarships should be given for improving the technique of the people employed in the industry?

A. That would be necessary.

Q. I should like to have your opinion on this question. As a provincial politician what would you prefer for producing these educational films and public health films? Would you prefer a Government agency doing it, or subsidising a private agency?

A. The latter.

Q. You know the educational films are not a paying concern. They will have to be exhibited free more or less?

A. That is why I should like the Government to aid them and private enterprise would produce them much cheaper. My experience is that Government has to spend more on everything it does.

Q. Don't you think that every department of the Government would have to have its advisers then? You cannot produce a public health film, for instance, without the aid of the sanitary expert.

A. Or some one else who understands the subject.

Q. He will have to be on the spot, he will have to write the plot, he will have to direct the various things.

A. Yes. I do not think any great harm will be done if Government takes it up. I do not mind it at all.

Q. You are indifferent about the method.

A. Yes, so long as the thing is done. If there are people who come forward to invest their money, Government should welcome it.

Q. But you see there are several departments of Government, agriculture, industry, education, public health and so on.

A. Yes.

Q. If there were one central studio for the province where they can produce these films, Government would be able to produce them better than by merely subsidising a private agency?

A. As I have said, I am quite indifferent.

Q. There is another aspect of the question. Your provincial Government has apparently a surplus budget. In a matter like this there is likely to be reduplication of the same work. Take, for instance, public health. There may be some local aspects. You can have a well-equipped central studio if all the provincial Governments pool their resources together, and all the films that are required can be done in consultation with the various provinces.



A. Certainly. So far as films which would be of universal application are concerned, they may be manufactured or controlled by a central board or some central agency. But in regard to certain supplementary things,—for instance, take the utility of the canals, I think the Punjab would be better qualified.....

Q. Not that the central studio will not go to the provinces in order to take films.

A. Yes, but probably the provincial agency will be able to evince more interest.

Q. I was rather surprised this morning to hear that they wanted to put down this film industry very low in the scale of industries. In a country like ours where illiteracy is so rampant, the spread of knowledge by means of the film is an essential factor?

A. Yes. It is one of the most potent factors in the spread of education.

Q. You would put the encouragement of the film industry by Government high in the scale.

A. Yes.

Q. As an important duty of Government?

A. Yes.

Q. You would not grudge Government spending money on that?

A. Certainly. I would support Government.

Q. This morning Lala Lajpat Rai put it down very low in the scale.

A. Probably he does not know what it costs the Indian cinema owners to get films from abroad and so on.

Mr. Neogy: You said that certain scenes in some films had better been left out. That observation of yours was made in connection particularly with the influence of the cinema upon the students?

A. More or less it applies to everybody.

Q. It is open to these students to read the worst kind of novels that come into the country and over which there is absolutely no check.

A. That is right. People can do all sorts of things on the sly, but there is no use giving them facilities to do them. Again, reading a thing is quite different from seeing it on the screen.

Q. In your opinion it is more harmful?

A. Undoubtedly.

Q. What do you say about the existence of bars in cinema theatres.

A. It is bad. That is what I would say, but, of course, there are other people who would say, if a man wants to have a peg let him have it. I am not here as a temperance preacher. But certainly the best opinion in the country is against the extension of the bar, and according to them the more of them you close down the better it would be.

Q. You would advocate their removal from the cinema theatres?

A. Yes, because it gives an opportunity to the students to have a drink there, although they may not like to go to a grog shop otherwise. I know some people who would not drink openly, but would not mind having a peg of whisky when it is dark. Certainly it gives more opportunity for indulging in strong drinks.

Chairman: Have you any other remarks to make?

A. I would like the Indian industry to be encouraged, and Indian plots to be exhibited. For instance, I have witnessed myself "Krishna Lila", "Krishna Janma", "Rana Pratap", and "The Light of Asia" depicting the life of Buddha, and they were all very popular and very instructive. At the same time they did not look like sermons and they were quite entertaining and interesting.

Q. You are all for encouraging the Indian industry?

A. Yes. The apprehension, which, for instance, has been expressed in certain quarters that there may be some danger of communal friction, could be easily avoided. In the first place, Indian literature is rich in drama, in fiction and in anecdotes. These can be woven into intelligible plots and exhibited on the screen. All the tales from Kalidas, *e.g.*, Sakuntala, Vikramorvisiya and Nalandaman, and such other things from Mahabharata—they could be used.

Q. Even from the Panchatantra. There is an enormous store there.

A. Yes. There will be no communal question there. There was only one community existing those days.

Q. It would draw only one community?

A. So far as this is concerned, I may tell you probably the majority of the cinema goers are from the Hindus, particularly, of the better class. Of course, there is a class of cinema goers that sit just close to the screen, and they are mostly recruited from the labouring classes. I do not mean that they should not be catered for. They should also be catered for, and they will find plenty of interest in these stories. Then there are stories from Indian history, for instance you can have some very good films from the life of Akbar which everybody would like, whether Hindus or Muhammadans, and other inoffensive things which will not lead to any communal friction.

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**Oral Evidence of Mr. F. H. PUCKLE, I.C.S., Deputy Commissioner of Amritsar, on Monday, the 28th November 1927.**

Q. Have you seen our questionnaire?

A. Yes.

Q. How long have you been in Amritsar?

A. About 4½ years.

Q. Is there any portion of the questionnaire in particular you would like to speak about?

A. I have very little first hand knowledge of films, because I have only been to the cinema about half a dozen times in 4½ years. As regards the beginning of the second part which deals with the effect of films on crime, I think no instance has come to my knowledge in which the crime or methods of crime could be directly attributed to the cinema.

Q. That seems to be the bulk of testimony so far.

A. I think the methods of crime are much the same in all countries.

Q. Have you any reason to be dissatisfied with the censorship as it is now?

A. No. On the whole I do not think so. There was a suggestion once that the District Magistrate should censor films, a proposal which I strongly objected to.

Q. During these 4 or 4½ years how often were you called upon to exercise your suspending power under the law?

A. I do not think more than 2 or 3 times, and then, I think, generally it was due to a mistake. I think in one case one portion of the film was certified in Bombay and another portion in Bengal and there was confusion as to which was going to be exhibited. There was a little bit of trouble about "Turki Hoor" which I went to see myself. There was nothing objectionable in it at all.

Q. You had no occasion, I suppose, to suspend a film?

A. No. I have never suspended a film more than temporarily.

Q. And on those occasions you did not confirm your temporary order?

A. That is so. I may add to that, I think in every case the complaint about the film came from the police and not from the public. I do not remember any case where I was approached by the representatives of the people.

**Q.** Is the cinema getting popular with your people there?

**A.** There are two cinema theatres in Amritsar, and there have been two for a considerable number of years, even before my time. Whenever I have been to the cinema the place has been half or two-thirds full, and it does not seem to me that the popularity of the films is increasing.

**Q.** Have you seen any Indian films yourself?

**A.** Only that one, "Turki Hoor", when I went there to inspect it.

**Q.** It was not a public show then?

**A.** It was.

**Q.** Was it popular?

**A.** Yes, the house was full.

**Q.** I do not propose to trouble you with questions of policy.

**Mr. Green:** I gather from your evidence that you do not consider that a different standard of censorship is necessary, for example, in a city like Bombay and a city like Amritsar. Am I going too far when I say that generally speaking a film passed in Bombay does no harm in a city like Amritsar?

**A.** I would rather put it this way. If you are going to start censoring with the idea that you must have different standards for Amritsar and Bombay, very little will ever get through.

**Q.** You do not think there is any serious risk from any point of view, morally or from the point of view of law and order, from films that have once been certified by Bengal or Bombay?

**A.** I should be prepared to take a Bombay Board of Censor's pass.

**Q.** Unless anything definite was brought to your notice?

**A.** Occasionally there might be something.

**Q.** That is to say, you think the present method of censorship and the safeguard of the District Magistrate's power of suspension are adequate.

**A.** I do.

**Mr. Neogy:** In suspending any film have you ever consulted any non-official Indian opinion?

**A.** As far as I remember I have always consulted non-official Indian opinion.

**Q.** Do you find it an advantage?

**A.** Undoubtedly. I am not prepared to say that a certain thing will be offensive to the feelings of a particular religion without consulting its members.

**Q.** Supposing, apart from the question of religion or communal differences, an advisory body were to be formed to advise you in the matter of the exercise of your discretionary power?

**A.** I should certainly welcome such a body.

**Mr. Coatsman:** Since you have been Deputy Commissioner of Amritsar, can you remember any travelling cinema coming into your district?

**A.** Yes, one or two but they were only travelling to the extent that they went from town to town. I should think travelling cinemas have visited large towns like Jandiala or Majidah of about 5,000 inhabitants. I have never heard of travelling cinemas in the villages.

**Q.** They never visit the *melas*?

**A.** Well, *melas* always are in the bigger places.

**Q.** We have heard a certain amount about departments like Agriculture and Public Health taking up propaganda by means of the film. Would you welcome such propaganda in your own district?

**A.** Yes, I think it would be a good thing. I do not know that it would do much good for a considerable time to come, but it is a good thing.

**Q.** But you think it would be worth while the department spending money?

4. Yes, I think it would be worth while. Of course the films would have to be very simple at first.

### Written Statement of Mr. B. D. SHARMA.

1. I have always taken a great interest in the cinematograph industry from my childhood. I have had connections with some Companies in America as a film-story-writer. I have studied some literature on the cinematograph industry and the art of writing for the screen as an amateur.

My special pretention is that, being a Psycho-analyst, I have experience and study of the influence of the screen on the people and the youth in particular.

I have also been for some time member of a cinematograph industry in India.

(a) I should think the young educated class in India, and the students in general, devote 60-70 per cent. of their evenings to the Cinemas; the mature educated classes generally at the rate of once a week or fortnight, leaving aside the religious old-fashioned or the busy people who very rarely visit Cinemas. Of the illiterate classes, the very low class people perhaps go to them and those too to see some adventurous serials or sex-films.

The attendance of the young generation and the illiterate low working class people is on the increase, perhaps because of the increase of the rubbish types of films and serials.

My experience refers to the cities of Lahore (in particular) and Delhi, Simla and Calcutta.

(b) Speaking of the Lahore city cinemas, my idea is that when a serial is being shown, 70 per cent. of the audience consists of the illiterate working class and the rest of the young educated class. Speaking of the more sensible life stories the audience consists of 40 per cent. students; 10 per cent. mature educated Indians; 30 per cent. Europeans or the like Indians and the rest illiterate class.

(c) Of children under 14 years of age, the percentage among the upper classes could only be perhaps 10 per cent., but among the poor or working classes, whose children wander freely, the percentage is generally 20-30 per cent. and is gradually on the increase.

3. Sensational films and films full of adventure dacoity, etc., are very popular with the low working classes children and young people too.

Emotional films dealing with life and historical films are popular with the educated youth as well as the matured Indian.

Films depicting nude female beauty and warm love scenes or obscene sexual scenes are popular with young, educated and the illiterate alike, and, to some extent, with matured educated Indian too.

Films dealing with Indian History or Mythology are most popular with the middle class, (literate and illiterate) and matured Hindus. Even the old fashioned religious Hindu visits such plays very often.

4. The exhibitors are far from being adequate in catering. The reason is that they see only to what amuses or attracts people and there is absolutely no care being taken to see the social or moral influence attached to the films.

5. Films produced in India, though not at all true to Indian life, history or mythology, are certainly popular and should naturally be more profitable.

Being a scholar too of Sanskrit, I am very familiar with Indian Mythology and History and can, with confidence, say that films produced in India and relating to Indian life or History are far from being an exact representation. They do not seem to be directed by qualified and able persons. Moreover, the acting therein is certainly a miserable failure. Stage-actors are often employed in the film-work and they too seldom prove better.

I should like to lay stress on the point that, on account of the film-industry being not regarded respectable and very poor in India, the actors are only some low class people, having no brains to act. Consequently, one of the most abominable features of Indian-produced films is their hopeless acting, which spoils all the beauty of the story, whatever that may be. It looks like mimicry, seldom to be appreciated by any sensible man.

6. (a) I am more than confident that if the films produced in India were of good quality, acting natural, the actors (at least, the chief) well-paid and educated persons and the films, scenerios and costumes well-directed, depicting the living Indian Life, History and Mythology, they could be not only immensely popular and profitable but much more educating and elevating to the people, socially and morally.

The proof of it is that even these abominable films, which are being produced to-day in India, have most of them proved so successful and popular. The middle class people, the low-class Hindus and even the old-fashioned religious Hindus and business people, who never dream of looking at a Western film, have, most of them, been seen to be frequenting the cinemas for such films.

(b) To the educated classes too would surely appeal all kinds of such films, provided they are well-acted, well directed and of good quality. But if the films continue to be of the same quality as they are now, I am doubtful if ever the educated fashionable class will be attracted to them; though even then the not very fashionable educated middle class and the illiterate, the old-fashioned and the low working class will always be immensely attracted by them.

To the illiterate classes would appeal films depicting ancient History and Mythology particularly, and the dramas of the present life of India to a great extent as well, excepting of course the films dealing with Indian News, etc.

7. I have no idea of the films obtainable for troops.

8. (a) I have given my views as regards the production of (b) Indian films but I should add this much here, that, if the status of the actors be raised and the Industry backed not only by capitalists and a well-organised all-India Committee but directed by persons qualified for the industry and able Pandits and dramatists well-versed in India History and Mythology, the film industry in India could achieve success unheard of in any other country.

I should also suggest that there should be a well-organised propaganda for impressing on the public mind, the necessity of adequate films in India for her social, moral and national welfare and explaining the pernicious influence that the unscrupulously distributed Western films have on the masses of India.

I am unable to answer questions relating to tax and tariff from 9 to 15.

16. I am doubtful as to the fact that you could find either directors, scenario-writers or actors suitable for the purpose; though perhaps you could find some producers.

To supply this deficiency, the first measure to be taken should be a vast said propaganda, conducted by some able persons.

The industry should have resources and capitalists at its back.

Some technical experts should at first be employed from America and suitable persons sent abroad to qualify themselves for acting and other branches of the industry.

I am of opinion that a great number of young men would gladly join the industry if the status of the actors were raised and a due value and respect awarded to them. As a Psycho-analyst, I even approve of a great many young men joining this profession, as their libido cannot be fixed at one point and they cannot be contented in their life, except by joining this profession, which I do not at all regard as not respectable.

17. Sufficient capital will be forthcoming if the industry were made popular and its advantages and necessity explained to the people who consider it at present, and rightly too, a degrading luxury.

What I mean is that even if one Company backed by the Legislature, could in the first place produce good films representing ancient Indian glory, it will gain a considerable profit and popularity. And so, by and by, other capitalists will naturally be attracted to it.

But all this is possible provided the said propaganda impresses on the people's mind the necessity of encouraging the national film industry in the face of the degrading influence of Western films on young men and the masses, and intelligent young men and able artists join the profession to make it something real, instead of the abominable mimicry which it is at present.

18. Private enterprise should certainly be encouraged by the Government; but at the same time legislative and administrative measures should be taken to control it well

I should suggest that the Western films be imported to a very limited extent and ample facilities given to the Indian producers. Now as the cinema craze is raging all over, the prohibition of Western films would produce such a great demand for Indian films that the producers and capitalists shall have plenty to do and gain.

The industry, however, must be under a central committee's guidance, which should see that the films produced are of good quality and do not misrepresent India, and that they are directed by well qualified persons.

20. (a) No; I am not in favour of expenditure by the Government for this purpose. I am of opinion that there are a great many capitalists who would gladly invest money in this industry, provided the Government gives them all facilities and prohibits Western films.

But if the Government can, without inconvenience, give a helping hand, though only for the beginning, I think she could encourage the industry in no better way.

(b) I should suggest that as a beginning an All India Limited Company should be started with the help of the Legislature and for this there would come plenty of capitalists to join it. By and by private enterprise for film-producing could be encouraged. One such company could be easily made perfect in all respects.

21. In my opinion, I shall have no faith in a state agency for the purpose mentioned. I should like a people's United Committee for the purpose, receiving powers from the Legislature. A state agency consisting of members selected not by the Government but by the people would serve the same purpose as well.

22. I do not approve in the least of the resolution of the Imperial Conference. Such a participation may to some extent assist the development of India's Industry, but will not be able to represent herself well to the Empire or the world.

To improve the standard of Western films in India other measures should be taken.

24. (a) Only a very limited number of the films exhibited in this country have no injurious effects on the typical Indian.

(b) Most of the serials are criminally suggestive and they have a fair circulation.

Though very few films have no morally degrading influence, I cannot say there is a general circulation of really immoral films.

(c) Serials are mostly harmful. All criminally suggestive and sex films are harmful. Not only the illiterate masses but the raw educated youths draw criminal suggestions from them and their brains are filled with thoughts, fancies, desires, and ambitions which can never be realised in their lives. They are thereby made discontented with their real lives, while they live in their imaginative world. The consequence is that they are in a way incapacitated for the lives they are to live. They become "Neurotics" for ever.

Most of the educated young brains are thus filled with confusing material. This is what really every Western film does for Indians in general. They begin to hate Indian civilisation and "Western civilisation complex" ruins the happiness, contentment, zeal, sincerity and progress of their lives. Western films are, nearly all of them, full of pernicious influence for an average Indian youth and all illiterate or typical Indians though most of the films of good quality afford quite an innocent and sometimes elevating influence on the minds of those who are of mature age and good education and fully understand the Western civilisation.

(d) Crime films ought to be more strictly censored. The criminal mind gets food generally mainly from the films, while the sex-instinct is fed by manifold sources.

(e) There has been an increase of crimes by "Gentlemen" mainly due to the influence of the Cinemas in Punjab. Among the honest working classes too, fights, rapes and other such exciting "Adventures" are the outcome of film-poison.

(f) Some time back several educated young men of Lahore were arrested for stealing articles like bicycles, chairs, tables, machines, shoes, sticks, etc. On investigation it was found they had no criminal psychology, but were only influenced by the serial-films.

Only last year an educated fashionable gentleman was arrested for theft. And the stolen property recovered from him consisted of nothing else but shoes, sticks, mirrors, teacups, watches, etc., stolen by him from his friends' houses.

25. I have already pointed out that the difference in social customs and outlook between the West and the East necessitates that there should be a total prohibition of the importation of Western films in India.

26. I do not consider it important. On the other hand many of the Indian-produced films do offend the religious and national susceptibilities of Indians as they mostly misrepresent our religion and civilisation.

27. (a) I do not think that the Western civilisation is misrepresented by any films, except by the crime and adventure-films of the extreme type. But indeed Western life is unintelligible even to an educated Indian of young age and the influence is certainly pernicious. Only men of matured age and those who have had occasion to travel abroad or had special opportunity to understand Western civilisation by contact in this country, do not misunderstand those films. But others, uneducated masses and educated youths, are by them only excited sexually in their imagination and confused by desires and fancies.

(b) Certainly. While in Germany, I had the occasion to see a film (produced in Berlin I think) dealing with the story of an Indian Prince, absolutely degrading Indian civilisation in the eyes of others.

Similarly, Indian-produced films are exhibited abroad and they are also sure to misrepresent India.

28. I have already shown this clearly enough.

29. Yes; if the Western films are to persist here so unscrupulously, there should certainly be a certification of certain films for Adults only.

30. No, I am not in favour of prohibiting children at all if they go with their guardians and not to the shows certified for adults only.

31. Censorship is an effective method; but . . . . .

32. The present system of censorship is absolutely useless, as the censors are quite incapable of seeing to the "Indian" interest and welfare. It should consist of Indians well-known for their ability and knowledge of their Indian welfare and Indian psychology and popular for their sincerity to the country.

33. A strict censorship there ought to be for the moral, social and national safeguard, but it should be of a nature which allows recreations not against the said interests and gives full play to the artistic and inspirational

development. No doubt, to a certain extent, the censorship shall have to be not strict, but a compromising attitude is not difficult to adopt.

34. I should advise a central board of censors, as then it could control the distribution of films in the whole of the country. It would not cause any inconvenience, as far as I think.

I have already stated what a Board of Censors should consist of. Let me add that it should be appointed by Legislature, but selected by the people, in Delhi.

The central board should only be under the Central Government.

The Central Board should be financed by the Government.

35. I would prefer some whole-time experienced officers—Indians—working with the cognisance of the Advisory Board of Non-Officials.

36. (a) The Inspectors working at present are not well-qualified, as it appears.

(b) All films need not be examined by all the members. The Officers should periodically submit only a report of the films and with the cognisance of the majority pass them on. They will be entitled to see any particular film if they so desire.

Gentlemen suitable for this purpose should certainly be available.

37. According to my suggestion of a Central Board, the difficulty does not arise.

40. There should be no censorship on the Handbills, etc., except the control of the Local Government.

41. I have not taken any notice.

42. None.

43. Certainly there is need for not a stricter but a more suitable and intelligent control over the import and export of films.

I should think the why and how of this question has been sufficiently explained by my previous statements.

44. The public and the press could very well and should certainly assist in the propaganda for awakening the nation to the necessity of national film production and removing the pernicious influence of the Western films. Moreover, the profession of acting and film-production should be made popular and respectable. The actors should then be regarded respectable and their status raised; and young men encouraged to enter this profession.

45. (a) The Board of Censors should examine scenarios and films before and after production. The Board should also see that the artists, actors, directors, scenerio-writers, etc., are well paid; because there is a tendency among Indian business men to pay as little as possible even to the best persons.

To make it a success, the industry should reasonably and handsomely pay the artists.

(b) Without doubt all film-producing agencies should be registered and licensed as well. I do not see any importance of inspecting the studios, except for the above mentioned purposes or some other specific purposes.

**Oral Evidence of Mr. B. D. SHARMA, Story Writer, on Monday, the 28th November 1927.**

*Chairman:* I understand you are a film story writer?

A. I was for some time. I tried it.

Q. Where did you try.

A. I sent one of my stories by post to America to the Palmer Photo Play Company.

Q. Did they take it?



A. They liked it very much.

Q. Did they film it?

A. I do not know whether they filmed it, but they took it.

Q. But surely if they filmed it you would have had some royalty. They paid you for it?

A. They paid me 50 dollars.

Q. And you never enquired?

A. I never cared to enquire.

Q. How many stories did you write?

A. Only one.

Q. Have you ever tried for an Indian film?

A. I never found any scope for that.

Q. I know in Bombay there are plenty of Indian studios and here also you have people like Mr. Widdicombe who are producing films.

A. But that was a tendency in my younger days.

Q. Now you have lost that talent by non-use?

A. I do not like to do it now.

Q. Do you think Indian films are getting very popular?

A. I should think so.

Q. Do you frequent the cinemas yourself?

A. Yes.

Q. Where did you acquire that habit?

A. Here in Lahore.

Q. As a student?

A. Yes.

Q. How often do you go?

A. Now I do not go very often but I think in my student days I used to go three or four times a week.

Q. To the detriment of your studies?

A. No, not to their detriment.

Q. And now you have dropped that habit.

A. Some how the films do not interest me because I always saw them with a critical eye and, to my mind, they have dropped off.

Q. What sort of films would you like to have, Indian or Western? What sort would appeal to you?

A. Anything social, not adventures or the sexual or criminal type but something which would stir people socially and morally.

Q. I see, you want something advocating reform in social life?

A. Yes.

Q. Have you seen "Sacrifice"? I suppose not. Have you read Tagore's "Sacrifice"?

A. I have read it but I did not see the film.

Q. Would you like to see something of that sort?

A. Yes, I should think so. I like Tagore very much.

Q. Would you be sorry if any film based on his stories were to be banned in this province?

A. Yes, I should be awfully sorry.

Q. But of course you see if we had all reform films only reformers like you would go to the cinema?

A. I do not mean to say that the films should advocate reform in such a plain way. I mean just like a pleasant story.

Q. Suggestive rather than aggressive? You would like that sort of film?

A. Yes.

Q. I suppose you think there are many incidents and portions in the Sanskrit—I see you are a student of Sanskrit—it is a storehouse from which you can draw materials for story writing?

A. Oh, yes.

Q. It is very unlucky that you have lost the art of story writing.

A. But I don't believe in any of the producing companies here in India. I mean to say, if there were good companies, I should take an interest even now.

Q. Any way I am not sure that the existing firms themselves will not encourage good writers. I think they are suffering from want of good writers.

A. And I think they are suffering from a want of good directors and actors too.

Q. Quite true. So you would like something done to improve Indian talent?

A. Yes.

Q. And you think experts should be sent for to train them here?

A. Yes.

Q. You think there must be a limit put on foreign films in order to encourage the growth of Indian pictures?

A. As a matter of fact I think they ought to be banned altogether—Western pictures.

Q. Many a man would cry against it.

A. I think so, but there would be a greater demand for Indian films.

Q. And you would put on a heavy duty on foreign films?

A. Yes, a very heavy duty.

Q. Have you seen the resolution of the Imperial Conference?

A. No. I have some idea of it, and I do not believe in it.

Q. I know, many people take up the cry when they see it in the newspaper. I was surprised to see that everyone who has appeared before us condemned it without having read it. They take the Imperial Conference resolution from hearsay in the newspapers and speeches.

Well, you have given us such a long and self-explanatory memorandum that it is hardly necessary for me to trouble you further.

*Colonel Crawford:* I understand you to say that you would like to see Western films banned.

A. Yes.

Q. On what grounds?

A. Because they are not suited for us. They are just mythology. The psycho-analysts have found that mythology has not a good effect on children, it makes many children neurotic, they begin to think of things impossible and they hanker after them all their lives. That is the effect Western films have on us.

*Mr. Green:* You advocate the total prohibition of Western films and you tell us that in your opinion the censorship is hopeless. Notwithstanding that, in answer to question 33 you say "No doubt, to a certain extent, the censorship will have to be not too strict, but a compromising attitude is not difficult to adopt." It is rather difficult to reconcile the two statements, is it not?

A. What I mean is that the censorship has to be mild in certain respects so as to satisfy the pleasure instinct of the people too; just as the president said that if films of my liking were to be shown, only reformers like myself would visit the theatres, so if the censorship looks to only those kinds of films, reformers only will go to see those films. That is what I mean by a compromising attitude.

**Q.** Not as regards Western films but simply as regards Indian films?

**A.** I wrote it with the idea that it was impossible that Western films will be banned. If they are not to be banned, then a compromising attitude is advisable.

### **Written Statement of Mr. D. D. KAPUR, Scenario Writer and Dramatist.**

1. I have no special connection with the Cinematograph industry but I have specially studied the industry and enclose herewith\* a copy of my article "Film Industry and International Politics" published in the "Hindu Herald", Lahore, dated 22nd, 23rd and 24th November.

2. One cannot definitely say because the audience differs with the cinema hall. In Lahore there are at present 5 cinema halls and the attendance in one is 95 per cent. illiterate and in the other 25 per cent. In one it is approximately 55 per cent. literate and the remaining illiterate. The increase is practically equal in both the classes.

(c) In my opinion it is not more than 1½ per cent. at all.

3. It is a very difficult question to answer because there are many people who like western fighting serials, while there are many who love religious pictures. There are many people who patronize romantic dramas while there are others who like thrilling plays. But there is a class of cinema patrons who want to see every angle of the technique, they want good photography, good acting, good settings, a good plot and a good scenario, in other words they want a perfect picture. But there are very few people of this type.

5. No.

(a) I would say 'No' with few exceptions.

(b) To some extent.

(c) Less profitable. Some of the successful Indian dramas are "Nal Damanti", "Krishan Lila", "Khaus Vadh", and "Pathi Bhakti".

6. Yes, provided they are handled in a masterly way.

(1) To the educated class, all sorts of these plays would appeal provided they are technically alright, and

(2) To the illiterate class, dramas of any sort provided they have good thrills and fighting and romantic scenes.

7. In my opinion there is no necessity of preparing special pictures for British or Indian troops because those that are shown to the civilians may be shown to the military men, but if any special film is to be prepared for the troops it may be done at any time necessary.

8. The present systems of distribution and exhibition are, in my opinion, quite satisfactory. The production of films is in a very backward condition and I have tried to suggest some points in my article entitled the Film Industry and International Politics.

9. Yes, as far as I think. There is the monopoly of the Madan Theatres Limited, Calcutta, on the exhibition side. This monopoly is very seriously harming the Indian film industry.

10. There is no such thing as Block Booking in the Punjab and in my opinion such a thing does not exist throughout India. This trouble is mainly with the Madan Theatres, Calcutta.

11. No: It is badly needed.

12. Amusement tax in my opinion is a hinderance to the industry and it should not be enforced at all.

13. Not to any great extent. If the custom duty is increased it would help the indigenous industry. Import duty on materials required for other

than dramas or picture films should be either abolished or fixed very nominally.

14. It may. There is at present no demand for those kinds of films because they are not in the market. Any how, if these kinds of films are available they would be readily bought.

15. Conditions in this country are most favourable for the development of the film industry on a very large scale. The reason is that the facility of the sunlight throughout the year can make production expenses low.

16. Although there are many good camera men and story writers, the actors are not satisfactory and moreover the want of capital also stands in the way of the Indian film industry. People should take an interest in the cinema industry and the educated people should enter the profession of acting.

17. Yes, provided interest is created in the minds of the rich classes.

18. Government should only help the building of the Central Studio and also in the discouragement of the monopolisers.

19. The cost of film production in India at present is very low as compared with the other countries. It is mainly for want of capital.

20. (a) Yes, rather necessary.

(b) No.

21. No state agency should be formed at all to monopolise the film industry of India. It would be the death stroke to the indigenous industry.

22. In my opinion India should not participate in the resolution of the Imperial Conference and there should be no preference given to the Empire films.

(a) The Indian film industry would not get any benefit.

(b) There are other ways of getting ourselves known better in the other parts of the Empire and I would not agree to this proposal.

(c) I do not think so. I am against any such policy.

23. (a) Yes, to some extent, but it all depends on the nature of the films that are to be produced.

(b) No special measures should be taken. But, of course, films from other parts of the Empire should be welcome and Indian pictures may be sent to those places.

24. (a) I do not think so.

(b) No.

(c) My reply is practically in the negative.

(d) Quite satisfactory.

(e) No.

25. No.

26. Yes, among Indian films are "Aurangzeb", "Shivaji", "Vir Durgadas", and among foreign films are "The Young Raja", "The Fatal Ring", etc., which to some extent offend the religious feelings and hence, if necessary, a bit more care should be exercised in censoring these pictures.

27. No. I would say no.

(b) No. If even there are some films misrepresenting India I do not think they were produced in India.

28. I do not think so.

29. If there are made some pictures undesirable for young boys under 14, then it is necessary that they should not be shown to them.

30. No.

31. Yes, but the question is if there is any misuse or not.

32. The censorship in the Punjab is defective because often some of the best pictures are not allowed to be screened and some are so mercilessly cut off that the dramatic value of the pictures is injured to a considerable extent.

The censorship should be in the hands of the public and one or two men of the film industry should be on the Censor Board in order to see to the industry's point of view.

33. (a) Yes.

(b) Naturally.

(c) Certainly.

34. There should be one central board but the provincial boards should also exist. I have written about the censorship in my article, *Film Industry and International Politics*, a copy of which is herewith attached.

(1) The answer is at length dealt with in my article.

(2) I do not think so.

(3) and (4) Refer my article.

(b) Yes.

(c) I have tried to deal with this question in my article.

(d) The central board should be financed by the censorship fee that would be charged, and, as regards the local boards, as there would not be much work they should be placed under the Municipal Committees who should bear the expenditure, if any.

35. No.

(b) If that officer is a man from the public, I would have no objection to such an arrangement.

36. I do not think so.

2. I cannot say.

3. Qualifications for an Inspector ought to be that he must have his country's good at heart, he must be in a position to see to the artistic point of the films, he must have a vast experience of the industry and its importance.

(b) Yes, I think gentlemen of the suitable standing would be forthcoming on a reasonable remuneration.

37. Yes.

(b) Not necessary at this stage.

38. Yes, more than once.

39. No.

40. No. It is all unnecessary. I have never come across any such advertisement.

41. I do not think there is any necessity of the improvement in this direction, and I have never thought of any.

42. No.

43--44. To a good extent.

45. (a) No.

(b) No.

### **Oral Evidence of Mr. D. D. KAPOOR, Scenario Writer and Dramatist, on Monday, the 28th November 1927.**

*Chairman:* You are a film critic? You generally write critical notes on films?

A. No, I am only in the film industry.

Q. I thought you had written some article or other?

A. I have written a few articles in certain papers.

Q. Well, what is your general verdict on the cinema? I mean the cinema as a whole; do you like it?

A. Certainly, Sir.

**Q.** You want to see it spread?

**A.** As much as possible.

**Q.** By substituting Indian for Western films or by encouraging both?

**A.** No, I am for absolutely Indian films.

**Q.** You want to Indianise the films in this country?

**A.** Certainly.

**Q.** And you would do everything for securing that end?

**A.** Of course.

**Q.** How is it your province is so lacking in that effort, with all this enthusiasm of people like you?

**A.** As far as my knowledge of the Punjab, or rather Lahore, goes, I would say that the people of Lahore are very enthusiastic on the cinema; they would like to uplift the film industry of India as much as possible, but they have got no scope here.

**Q.** Why not? What prevents them from doing it?

**A.** Well, no people with capital are coming forward.

**Q.** I mean, if there is money in it?

**A.** They don't mind it. The cinema is thought of as a bad thing.

**Q.** They think it negligible, they do not attach any importance to it?

**A.** In my opinion we must first look to the education of the younger generation.

**Q.** You attach the greatest importance to the cinema as a factor in popular education?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** And you want public money spent on that judiciously?

**A.** Of course, as much as can be spared.

**Q.** Then you are a journalist; why don't you advocate that view in your journal?

**A.** I am thinking of starting a film journal from Bombay.

**Q.** What is the good of starting a journal from Bombay when what you want to do is to induce your Government here?

**A.** I do not think I have got such influence as to induce the Government. I think if I have a paper at my back I might do some service to my country as well as to this industry.

**Q.** Have you travelled in the West?

**A.** No.

**Q.** You are a frequenter of cinemas?

**A.** Of course.

**Q.** Has it got any special effect on the people?

**A.** I would certainly say No, because as far as my opinion goes and as far as I have heard from various sources, people say that in England and America while there are certain kissing scenes going on people shout and cry there also, if not as much as in India, to some extent. Therefore I would say there is no special effect.

**Q.** You have heard what a leading citizen of your city, Dr. Gokulchand Narang, said?

**A.** I don't agree with him. He said himself that he goes only once or twice in the month to a cinema.

**Q.** Still he is in a position to judge; and he is a prominent citizen who lives among the people.

**A.** He may live among the people, but I am one of the people, therefore I think I am a better judge in that respect.

**Q.** You don't attach any importance to that view?

A. Not at all. On the other hand I am thinking of sending my article, "Film Industry and International Politics," to him. It might change his view.

Q. You think the good effects are so many that the evil effects may be ignored because they are so small?

A. Yes.

Q. So you move among the people who go to the cinema?

A. Certainly.

Q. I should like to know, I heard last night from a responsible person, that in some cinemas here near the bar some women are dressed up in the way in which women appear on the screen—have you seen any such?

A. No, I have not seen them.

## PESHAWAR.

### Written Statement of B. LAWTHER, Intelligence Bureau, North-West Frontier Province.

1. None.

2. (a) A Cinematograph Hall was opened in Peshawar City in 1921. Before this, there were Cinemas in the Cantonments. These Cantonment Cinemas are little attended by Indians, and hardly at all by Indian Troops. Before the arrival of the Cinema, the only popular form of entertainment was provided by the frequent travelling theatrical companies, which often made stays of two or three months and could occupy a large hall and attract large crowds. In spite of the opposition, the Cinema was able to establish itself. It appealed to a better class, and had a separate clientele. It has never attracted the rougher classes of people, and vendors of illicit drugs and the like, who are to be found in and about the theatre, are not found at the Cinema. The Cinema is becoming increasingly popular with the educated classes, and better class seats are now provided for about fifty per cent. of the audience. Accommodation in the Cinemas of the City is provided for about one per cent. of the population and there are two performances daily and two Matinees weekly as well. The Matinees are for the benefit of villagers, who come in on Fridays, and for clerks on Sundays. During festivals, the Cinemas have been able to give continuous performances, and at times, such as the Muharram, they have closed.

There are Cinemas in Nowshera and Risalpur Cantonments. In the other districts of the province, only Bannu City has a permanent Cinema and in Hazara, at Abbottabad, one is open occasionally. The towns in the rest of the Province are small and they are probably unable to support a permanent Cinema. Touring Cinemas make occasional visits.

(b) The average Cinema audience consists of young apprentices, shop-keepers, clerks, and a few students. The latter are not more than four per cent. Ne'er-do-wells, who find money to go to the theatre in large numbers, do not frequent the Cinemas.

(c) Very few children under fourteen years are taken to the Cinema and a small percentage are adolescents of impressionable age.

3. The majority of Cinema-goers want action in a film with plenty of thrills.

4. Where the taste for this form of entertainment had to be created, a Cinema could not afford to put on a bad performance, even when there was no competition. On the other hand in Peshawar Cantonments, before there was competition, the performances were poor and compared badly with those of the City Cinema.

6. (a) Yes. I understand that some good Indian films have been much appreciated.

(b) The educated like historical stories, and illiterates can understand mythology on the film.

7. Very few Indian troops visit the Cinemas in the Cantonments. They prefer to go to the City.

9. The halls in the Province are very small and the cost of hiring films must represent a large percentage of the takings. Well known films are often shown, when the prices of seats are raised fifty per cent. and the films paid for on a percentage basis.

14. The use of the Cinema for educational purposes in schools will create the Cinema habit, and a demand for this form of entertainment in places where it is unknown.

24. I do not consider that any classes of films now exhibited are injurious, and there is no general circulation of immoral or criminally suggestive



films. Censorship is adequate in the case of "Sex" and "Crime" films. There has been no increase in crime attributable to the influence of the Cinema of the Province.

25. No. The mere representation of different social customs is not likely to be harmful. Differences of customs and social outlook form one of the interest of the film and place the audience in the position of travellers in a new country.

26. (a) Care is taken and I know of no such example.

27. (a) Uneducated Indians are accustomed to forms of entertainments, and understand the role of entertainers. Films representing Western life are not likely to be misunderstood.

(b). No.

31. (a) Censorship seems to be the only practicable method.

32. Yes. Films have usually made a considerable tour in India before they are shown in this Province.

33. The Censorship appears to be strict.

37. (a) Yes, by an order of the Local Government.

(b) No.

38-39. No.

40. No Censorship of posters has been found necessary.

41. No.

**Oral Evidence of Mr. B. C. A. LAWThER, Officer in Charge, Intelligence Bureau, North-West Frontier Province, on Wednesday, the 30th November 1927.**

*Chairman:* We are glad to meet you, Mr. Lawther. How many years' experience have you in this province?

A. I have been here since 1908.

Q. I suppose you know all the districts in the province?

A. Yes, I have served in all the districts.

Q. Where all have you got cinemas now?

A. There are two in the cantonment here, and there is one in the city.

Q. I heard there was another in the city which closed down?

A. Yes, there was one which lasted for a short time and was closed, the reason being that there was no room for two cinemas.

Q. What is the population of this place?

A. In the city the population is 80,000, and in the cantonment it is about 20,000; we have got a population of nearly one lakh.

Q. You mean that with a population of 80,000, they could not afford to run two cinemas?

A. The seating accommodation in each cinema is about 800. They are holding two performances daily, and on Fridays and Saturdays they hold matinees, and I think that is as much as the people can afford.

Q. Who owns the city cinema?

A. I forget his name. It is the Imperial Bioscope.

Q. Is he merely an exhibitor or is he the owner of the building who is renting it out?

A. He owns the building, and he is also the exhibitor. He is a local man.

Q. How long has that cinema been running in the city?

A. The first cinema was opened in the city in the year 1921; and one in the cantonment was opened in 1914 or before.

**Q.** Are both the cinemas owned by the same individual or by different people?

**A.** They are owned by different individuals. The cantonment cinema, known as the "Cinema de Paris," is owned by an Indian company consisting of three or four shareholders, and the Empress Cinema is also owned by local gentlemen. There is another cinema in Nowshera which is also owned by private individuals. The cinemas in the cantonments cater for the troops. There are also other cinemas known as the Frontier Cinema and the Imperial Bioscope.

**Q.** In what other places have you got cinemas here?

**A.** I have mentioned these in my written statement. (The witness handed in his statement to the Committee.) There is one in Bannu city, and there is another cinema which is occasionally opened in Abbottabad.

**Q.** Is there any cinema in Dera Ismail Khan?

**A.** No, none.

**Q.** Do the frontier tribes visit the cinemas here?

**A.** The matinee on Friday is arranged specially for villagers who come into Peshawar city, and the matinee on Sunday is arranged for clerks. The evening performances are generally attended by the people of the city.

**Q.** Do the people of the independent tracts come and see the cinemas at all?

**A.** They would probably attend on Friday afternoon, but not in large numbers.

**Q.** What are the rates, do you know?

**A.** 4 annas, 8 annas and Re. 1 in the city, and in the cantonment 8 annas, Re. 1 and Rs. 2.

**Q.** Are the cinemas in the cantonment frequented by Indians?

**A.** Hardly at all. Indian troops prefer to go to the city.

**Q.** Do you know if the city cinemas show Indian films?

**A.** I have heard that one or two Indian films have been shown.

**Q.** Have you any report as to their popularity with Indians?

**A.** I have heard that good ones are very popular.

**Q.** Among the western ones, what appeals most to the Indian audience?

**A.** I have always been told that action films and humorous ones appeal most to Indians.

**Q.** I suppose in the cantonment you get the usual sort of films like social dramas?

**A.** The cantonment programme is entirely chosen for British troops.

**Mr. K. C. Neogy:** Who chooses the programme?

**A.** The proprietor himself.

**Q.** Does he consult anybody?

**A.** That I don't know.

**Chairman:** Do you think the British troops are well served here?

**A.** When there was only one cinema here, it was very bad, but as soon as a second cinema came into existence, it began to compete with the older one and the programme was very good.

**Q.** What sort of films satisfies the troops?

**A.** I think they like the usual kind of social dramas, and war films.

**Q.** Otherwise, generally they care more for the social dramas?

**A.** I think so.

**Q.** I suppose you seldom find time to go to the Cantonment cinemas?

**A.** I go very infrequently.

**Q.** Have you got any system of inspection of cinemas on behalf of the police here or the magistracy?

A. The programmes are usually sent to the District Superintendent of Police in every district where there are cinemas, and as there is a change of programme only once a week, he only gets two notices, for which he is responsible. The City Inspector or the Cantonment Inspector would also visit the cinemas and see the films.

Q. We were told in Lahore that an Inspector was told off to see the films. Have you any such man deputed here for that purpose?

A. Nobody is specially told off here, only the officer in charge of the City or the Cantonment goes and sees the films.

Q. Has there been any occasion for you, or for the District Magistrate or for the Deputy Commissioner to stop any show under the powers vested in him by the law?

A. In this province we have never had to stop any show. If a film is banned in any province, it is automatically banned here.

Q. Even if it passed in Bombay but banned in Bengal?

A. It would still be banned here. If a film is banned in any province, we don't allow it here.

Q. You don't judge it for yourself?

A. That is not necessary, because we have not got our own Board.

Q. It may be banned for some local reason which may not apply to the North-West Frontier Province?

A. Of course, if a man is anxious to show any such film and comes to us, we would always listen to his reasoning, but ordinarily the rule is that if a film is banned in one province, it is automatically banned here, and we have never had any occasion to ban any film ourselves which was not banned elsewhere.

Q. I suppose you are satisfied with the censorship that at present exists, so far as this province is concerned?

A. It is quite adequate for the present small number of cinemas, but if the number of cinemas increases then the situation will be different.

Q. I suppose you would advocate the encouragement of Indian films for Indian audiences?

A. Yes, because a good Indian film will always attract large classes of people.

Q. You don't think there has been any increase of crime due to the cinemas?

A. No, not in this province.

Q. We were also told the same thing elsewhere. Although there is a general impression among the people that the increase of crime is due to the cinemas, the police agree that it is a wrong impression.

A. Before the cinema came crime was usually put down to penny dreadfuls.

Q. You think the cinema adds to the amusement of the people and keeps them from mischief?

A. I think the cinema is a necessity. Before the cinema, the only popular form of entertainment was provided by the travelling theatrical companies which used to visit here once in two or three months.

Q. I suppose the cinema appeals to the people more than the theatres?

A. The cinema appeals to a better class of people. We have noticed that whenever a theatre comes there is trouble in that the vendors of illicit drugs always hang round the theatres. That is not the case with the cinemas.

Q. Have you got a bar in the cinemas here?

A. In the Cantonment cinemas there is a bar, but not in the city ones.

Q. Would there be much objection if the bar were removed from every cinema?

A. I don't think there is any demand for a bar in the cinema as the population is largely Muhammedan.

Q. I mean in the cantonments too?

A. There won't be any objection, because it is only visited by troops.

Q. Even for them it would be better not to have a bar attached to the cinemas?

A. I suppose so.

Q. Do you get a mixed audience in the cantonment cinemas?

A. In the cheaper seats there will be nobody except soldiers, but in the higher class seats you will probably find some well-to-do gentry.

Q. On the whole you would like an effort to be made to increase the number of cinemas and also to increase the Indian films?

A. Yes.

Q. You think that the mere representation of different social customs is not likely to be harmful? That is a thing which will open the eyes of the people and enlarge their vision, is that your point of view?

A. Yes.

*Colonel Crawford:* Do any of the travelling cinemas go to the Khyber at all?

A. I have heard that one travelling cinema had gone there entirely for the benefit of troops.

Q. Did it belong to the local theatres?

A. It came from Rawalpindi, I believe it belonged to a Mr. Lyons.

Q. When you say that the audience in the city cinemas is composed of villagers and people from the town of Peshawar, I suppose you mean a variegated audience, people from Central Asia and other tracts?

A. A large number of people who live in the serais also visit the cinemas.

Q. You said that so far as you knew there has been no increase of crime due to the cinemas. But there was a raid on a train here?

A. I think it was at Jehangira a long time ago, and the people concerned were Afridis led by a well known outlaw.

Q. It has been suggested that the raiders got the idea from seeing a similar film in some cinema and put it into practice?

A. That was the only instance of the holding up of a train and it occurred in 1915. It cannot be attributed to the cinema.

Q. Is the cinema habit growing among the people?

A. Yes, I have been told that there is a large demand for better class seats, which shows that the cinema is attracting a better class of people.

Q. You said that you do not visit the cinemas very much, but are you satisfied with the general standard of the films shown?

A. I have seen the advertisements, and I am satisfied with the general standard. I have not heard any complaint, except the one that I mentioned, namely, that when there was only one cinema in the cantonment it was very bad, but when another was started there, things were improved. At that time there was only one cinema in the city, and people from the cantonment would go to the city to see the cinema shows, at great trouble, in preference to the cantonment cinema.

*Mr. Green:* We have been impressed by the fact that no city with a population of less than 50,000 could profitably run a cinema. We are also impressed with the desirability of good films being shown, largely for the reason that they will open the eyes of the people and lead to their advancement. Could you suggest any way by which we can encourage part time theatres? I suppose the police regulations about licensing and safety have to be just as strict?

A. Travelling cinemas have visited the province and the shows were held in the open air at Bannu. We don't feel any difficulty as regards regulations regarding the safety of the audience.

Q. You also said that Friday shows are largely intended for villagers. Do they come from long distances to see the shows?

A. A large number of villagers come to the city on Fridays to attend the mosque in any case. They come in the morning and probably go to the cinemas in the afternoon.

Q. A good number of them pay 4 annas, and you think the cinema habit is growing?

A. Yes.

Q. You think that far from hurting them, the cinema will do them good?

A. It is very good for them.

Q. You told the Chairman that if a film is banned in one province it is automatically banned here, but the Chairman suggested that a film might be banned in a particular province for a particular reason; but though that reason might not be applicable to your province, you would still ban it?

A. I believe the local people depend on circulating libraries of films, and they have to take largely what they are sent, and that when a film is banned in one province, it is probably withdrawn.

Q. For instance, if a film is banned in Burma for any particular reason, I presume the same reason may not be applicable to this province? I am only putting it to you if we can devise any method of letting the trade know about the suspension of a film and giving them an opportunity to present their case to the Board of Censors?

A. Yes.

Mr. Neogy: Do the tribal people visit the cantonment cinemas?

A. No, the cantonment audience is entirely composed of British troops.

Q. I think you mentioned about the holding up of a train by Afridis?

A. That was the single offence that occurred in 1915, but I never heard that it was due to the cinema.

Mr. Green: It was recently suggested that Miss Ellis' affair was due to the influence of the cinema.

Mr. Neogy: "The Times" of London had the following editorial note on the 23rd of August 1923:—"A little while ago there was definite proof that the abduction by Natives of an officer's wife was suggested by a serial film in which scenes of violence occurred". Are you aware of any such thing?

A. I never heard that. That offence was not due to the cinema.

Q. What proportion of the Indian troops go to the cinemas?

A. The Indian troops go to the city cinemas, and it is impossible to say how many of them are going. They go in plain clothes.

Q. Don't soldiers in uniform get some sort of concessions?

A. Indian troops don't go in uniform to the city cinemas.

Q. Is there any concession to soldiers if they go to theatres in uniform?

A. I think there is, but Indian troops don't go in uniforms to theatres.

**\*Oral Evidence of Qazi ABDUL GHANI. Extra Assistant Commissioner, Peshawar, on Wednesday, the 30th November 1927.**

Chairman: You haven't sent in a written statement?

A. No.

Q. You are Extra Assistant Commissioner here?

A. Yes.

Q. How long have you been here?

A. I am a resident of this place--my birthplace is Peshawar.

Q. Have you served in other parts of the province?

A. Yes. In Bannu, Tonk, Kohat and other places.

Q. Have you got a cinema in any of those places?

A. I think there is a cinema in Bannu--at least, so I hear. I have not seen it; it was not there when I was there.

Q. Of course you have seen the cinema here in Peshawar?

A. I have.

Q. Do you go there frequently?

A. Not always but I should say twice or three times a week.

Mr. Green: In the city or in the cantonment?

A. In both places. I frequent the cinemas in the cantonment more, as I am resident of the cantonment, but I go sometimes to the city cinemas also.

Chairman: Have you seen any Indian films?

A. Yes.

Q. Which were those?

A. They were films about the life of Buddha and the birth of Krishna.

Q. Did you like them?

A. I did.

Q. Would you like to see Indian films more often?

A. Well, I would certainly, if they are well developed and nicely got up.

Q. And the audience when you went there, the Indian audience, liked them very well?

A. The Peshawar people, since they are near the city cinemas, generally like them.

Q. You mean you saw these Indian films in the city--Indian films are not shown in the cantonment?

A. Only once or twice, I think two years or 18 months ago.

Q. Was it "The Light of Asia"? What was it?

A. No, it was, I think, "The Birth of Krishna" or something like that and it was meant only for the Indian troops who were asked to go there. Otherwise the cinemas in the cantonment are visited by British soldiers.

Q. You said this was exhibited in the cantonment. Did the British soldiers go to see it?

A. Very few.

Q. The audience was Indian.

A. Indian troops. They were given a concession and I think the show was meant for them. It was specially arranged. That was done once in the Emperor Cinema and once or twice in the Cinema de Paris. But that was specially arranged at the request of the Indian officers of the regiment.

Q. Now, when you go to the city show, whenever you do go, what sort of films appeal to the Indians there?

A. Well, I think, people who have been round about India and other places, they would like to see some comic or adventurous films. But these don't appeal, I think, very much to the younger folk, the little children.

Q. Children don't like that sort of thing; the comics they don't like?

A. They do. But in fact people who are grown up and have been about like these films that are adventurous and comic.

Q. With whom are social drama pictures popular at all?

A. Do you mean the Indian films?

**Q.** No, western films depicting social life.

**A.** I think very few are being shown. It is only comica and adventure films that are shown in the city.

**Q.** Probably in the cantonments they may be showing more of the social drama.

**A.** A good many of the American Universal films shown there are things like that. There are very few British films shown there—the majority of them are Universal American films.

**Q.** Oh yes, everywhere the bulk of the pictures shown is American. I am not now distinguishing between American and British. I am referring to social drama films, films depicting social life.

**A.** Some of them are shown in the cantonment, but I cannot say if they are shown in the city as I am not a frequenter of the city cinemas.

**Q.** You have seen more of the adventure and comic films in the city?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** What sort of effect do you find the cinema producing?

**A.** Well, I think if there are some love films going on they are generally rather harmful to the younger folk and to the students generally.

**Q.** But have you seen many of them?

**A.** I have in the cantonment.

**Q.** But the Indians don't go there?

**A.** Still, there are a good many of the Indian educated who go there. They have got their children, and as the cinemas are so near the Sadar Bazar, you find the younger folk going there and even the fathers taking their youngsters with them for a sort of innocent amusement, though not many. But I know that in the city a good deal of the younger folk go.

**Q.** Oh yes. But I am now speaking of those which you saw in the cantonment dealing with social life.

**A.** They are being visited.

**Q.** I mean on the British soldiers has it any effect?

**A.** That I cannot say. I have noticed a good many of the kiddies of the British soldiers there,—girls and boys of tender ages, some between 8 and 10 and between 12 and 15. Because I think there is some concession for them, or in some of the cinemas they don't charge the younger folk, they go there free.

**Q.** For them you think it would be harmful?

**A.** I think it would be harmful, because if there are all these criminal things going on and love scenes, they are sure, I think, to have a bad effect on their morals. They should be shown instead some health or educational or industrial films.

**Q.** But then they wouldn't want to go there—I mean the British soldiers?

**A.** They won't. But for the Indians and the younger folk, I think these would be the best films. But a British soldier or any other grown up person would not like to go to a place where there are no comic or adventurous or love scenes.

**Q.** But you have seen these mostly, you say, in the cantonment?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** And we have just heard from Mr. Lawther that it is almost entirely a British audience in the cantonment.

**A.** It is, but at the same time there are a good number of Indians too. I mean almost all the clerks of the various departments in the cantonment here, when they are free from office and want a sort of innocent amusement, they are generally given concessions too, and at the same time the proprietors are known to a number of them and they go there either as concessionists or on free passes.

Q. Then your impression is that Indians also go to the cantonment cinemas—Indians of the clerical class and Indian officers perhaps?

A. Oh yes, they do.

Q. Then you mean to say you are not satisfied with the films shown in the cantonments—some of them?

A. I should say they are not going to affect me, but they are certainly going to affect the kiddies.

Q. You mean children below 12?

A. Yes, because naturally there is nothing else in the film as you say. In fact, they may be good from the western point of view but from the eastern point of view, if you find little children sitting there and seeing all this kissing going on and other things, and at the same time criminal things going on, how the dacoits stand here and get hold of a man and so on, that is just teaching them bad manners. And the same is the case in the city cinemas. I have been there too on some occasions and the city here, I might say, is full of hooligans and riff-rafs. They know already a good deal about these criminal things and these films give them new ideas for doing further mischief.

Q. So you believe that the cinema as shown here has too much kissing and embracing and crimes?

A. That is what I have been seeing.

Q. You don't like it? You won't have such films at all?

A. Certainly I would like to see the younger folk provided with some educational, health or industrial films in preference.

Q. You are for producing educational films?

A. Yes, Sir.

Q. Is any educational film shown in the province?

A. I don't think so.

Q. Has any attempt been made by your Government in that direction?

A. I don't think it was ever brought to their notice, nor have they thought of it.

Q. You think it would be a very good idea to have educational films and public health and such other films?

A. Yes.

Q. You think that Government should undertake the job of producing such films?

A. If finances will allow of it, I think that is the only way of doing it. Because the majority of the people in this province are uneducated and illiterate and the majority of them are inclined to be rather out of work and they are in touch with people who cannot be put in the category of good people, so that if such films are exhibited here they are sure to have a bad effect, whereas educational films will do them a lot of good.

Q. Then you don't agree with Mr. Lawther that there is nothing wrong with the cinema as shown in the province? He thinks there is nothing wrong.

A. Well, Sir, his experience is the best, he being the C. I. D. senior officer, he has got his own views and I think he knows the criminal things best. But from what I know, I have seen even these little boys coming out of the cinema keep talking, even to their mothers, about all these kissing scenes that they have seen and how the dacoit went up the ladder and how he got hold of the man and how he knocked him down.

Q. They enjoy it?

A. They do. But at the same time I think the enjoyment goes a little further and they keep on learning the tactics of doing things.

Q. Mr. Lawther tells us definitely "I don't consider that any class of films now exhibited are injurious and there is no stricter censorship



required for immoral or criminally suggestive films. The censorship is adequate in the case of sex and criminal films." Do you disagree with that view?

A. Well, Sir, though the films may not look so criminal to begin with, I think they do have some effect on the minds of the younger folk.

Q. That is your fear? Of course, you are entitled to your opinion. And you think the censorship should be stricter?

A. I should say so, Sir.

Q. But I suppose you have thought of the other position, that if you make it too strict or tighten it up too much, the amusement portion will disappear and the cinema will not be popular. For instance, you would like to see some kissing scenes, wouldn't you?

A. Well, Sir, it is not going to have any bad effect on me. I am rather too old.

Q. None of us are too old for enjoying ourselves, are we?

A. No.

Q. And people of your age, you would like them to have such films? Only you want to prohibit children from going there?

A. Yes, Sir. Because people visit these cinemas for amusement and unless there are these comics and adventure and love scenes, they would not agree to go to the cinemas.

Q. I suppose you don't believe in censoring novels which deal with women?

A. Those novels are equally injurious.

Q. Your point of view is that in such cases children must be prohibited from going?

A. And there must be one or two days in the week, if it can possibly be arranged, when there should be only films for children.

Q. You think it is not injurious or immoral for the adult but it may be injurious or immoral for the younger ones, such as children below the age of 14.

A. Yes.

Q. So would you advocate some cinemas to be classified as for adults only?

A. Yes, Sir.

Q. Would that meet your point of view?

A. Yes.

Q. You think parents are too negligent?

A. I think they are. And unfortunately in the city, as I should say the majority of the kiddies have more control over their fathers and they can go to the cinema whenever they like. They are not entirely under the control of the parents as they are in the west.

Q. Which attracts the Indian audience more, the western film or the Indian film?

A. In the Cantonment the people have got more addicted, during the two or three years I have been here, to the western film, but even in the city, when there are western films being shown, the cinemas are equally full. In fact, if there are some Indian films, naturally people would go there in greater numbers because they can understand them better, Sir. The majority of them are uneducated.

Q. They follow their own surroundings better. What are the Indian films which are shown here?

A. Bombay films. Madans, and Kohinoor and Imperial productions.

Q. Do the Mussalman population go to the cinema much?

A. They do, Sir.

Q. Equally as the Hindus do?

A. I should say the majority of the Hindu ladies go as well.

Q. Is there a ladies' day?

A. Well, Sir, there are separate places which are reserved for ladies and so they generally go when there are Indian films.

Q. Indian ladies go when there are Indian films. They do not go to the western films?

A. Generally they don't. Only those ladies go who belong to the educated class. I mean wives of pleaders and barristers, and some other officials.

Q. Muhammadan ladies go too?

A. Very few. On account of the *purdah* system, they are not allowed.

Q. Do Hindu ladies observe *purdah* anywhere in this province?

A. Well, they do, but not much. Some of the more refined or more advanced, as we should say, don't observe *purdah* but the majority of them observe the *purdah*.

Q. Is there a special day for ladies given here?

A. No, Sir, not to my knowledge.

Q. I noticed somebody spoke of "ladies' day".

A. They may have some shows of which I have no knowledge.

Q. When you go to the cinemas you do find some ladies too in the back boxes?

A. Yes.

Q. Was there ever any attempt at producing films in this province?

A. I do not think the people here are so advanced. As this province is backward in every way, it must remain backward in this too.

Q. You are not backward in intelligence. Only you don't use it.

A. What are we to do? We have been put on the black list. We do not get what other people are getting, so we feel we have to remain content with being put on the black list.

Q. You think then if an effort is made, this province can produce films?

A. It can. We do not find ourselves intellectually inferior to others.

Q. I don't believe you are at all. You think they will take to this industry here? Supposing some vocational classes were opened in your colleges or schools for teaching cinema acting and photography?

A. Yes, Sir, there are many people of ambition. If such a class were opened, it would be a step in the right direction.

Mr. Neogy: I think you said that students also go to the cinemas?

A. Yes.

Q. Do they go in considerable numbers?

A. I should say in the city they do.

Q. What is the student population, roughly, in Peshawar?

A. That I cannot say. But many of the houses, in fact in some places you find 4 or 5 or 6 sons to every house. I cannot say exactly, but it is a good number.

Q. But those who go to the cinema form a large proportion of the student population?

A. They do. It is not only the student class—even the others go.

Q. I know, but I was asking you about the students for the moment. You have told us about the others. I was only anxious to know what the students like. What is the sort of films which the students like—those who are reading in the colleges?

A. I think up till now it has never occurred to them that they should be expected to make any differentiation. They have been seeing all these comics and adventurous films or anything which is exciting, anything which makes them laugh.

**Q.** Naturally. What kind of films do you think would attract the tribal people? They also, I am told, go to the cinema on occasions. Do they make a choice at all, or do they go to any cinema that may happen to be on while they are here?

**A.** They generally come here to say their Friday prayers, and then we find any number of them go during the afternoon, because the rates are so cheap—they don't really understand what is going on but there are Peshawaris and others who keep on interpreting things to them.

**Q.** Is there any special programme for Friday or are just the usual things shown?

**A.** The usual programme.

**Q.** The titles are all in English?

**A.** They are, but in the Indian shows they are given in the vernacular too.

**Q.** Indian pictures, you mean?

**A.** Yes, you find one screen coming down explaining in English and another in Hindi and another in Urdu.

**Q.** I think most of the Indians can follow the Indian titles?

**A.** They do.

**Q.** Now, supposing the city theatres here were to show Indian films exclusively of the type which you have seen, do you think they would suffer in popularity—these theatres?

**A.** Well, I think there should be some mixture of the western too, because people have got, in a way, addicted to these things. If there are only Indian films . . . . .

**Q.** Quite.

**A.** Because these western films are more exciting and Indian films are just copies of the original things, and if the originals disappear the duplicates won't be so popular. The people here have got addicted to these things. If they could just arrange to have some days for western films and some other days for Indian films, that would keep the audience to these houses, otherwise they would be only starving beggars, the cinema people, if there is only one thing.

**Q.** I was very interested to hear that the two films that attracted you were those that dealt with the life of Buddha and the birth of Krishna. But do the films dealing with Hindu mythology appeal to the Muhammadans generally? I am not talking about you. You are a highly educated man. But do you think they would appeal to the average audience?

**A.** I don't think they appeal to the average Muhammadan, because they don't understand those things. They are so bigoted. Immediately they hear there is some Hindu film going on, they will not go there. The same is the case with Hindu middle class population. If there is a Muhammadan film being shown, they will not go there.

**Q.** But so far as the educated classes are concerned, they are unaffected by these films? After all, they are only for entertainment.

**A.** They know that things like that make no difference. Otherwise communal things have been having their effect everywhere.

**Q.** But don't you think this would also be one way of leading to a better understanding between the communities? If the Indian films could depict subjects which might interest the Muhammadans and Hindus, for instance Akbar's reign and things of that kind, don't you think that might lead to a better understanding?

**A.** Yes, it would. There is no doubt about that.

**Q.** So that sort of film would be very popular here both among the Hindus and the Muhammadans?

**A.** Yes.

*Col. Crawford:* I listened with interest to your evidence particularly with regard to the Indian films and I am left with the impression that you are making some reservation in your own mind regarding the Indian films. Do you consider their quality is good enough yet?

A. No, Sir. I do not think they have such a good impression on the mind as we find from western films.

Q. They are not so entertaining, is that it?

A. I should say people do go in great numbers because they are Indian films but at the same time they are not so nicely done up as the western films.

Q. You criticise their quality and the lack of action, possibly.

A. Yes.

Q. Now, would you suggest that we should recommend that all western films shown in this country should have the captions written in Urdu? At present these western films have only English captions.

A. I think a good many of the people who go there are educated people and know English, but if a thing like that were done, it would only make things look better.

Q. It would be advantageous to have two headings; English and the vernacular of the province?

A. Yes, Sir. Because many of the people who are going there are uneducated and they have to fall back on their interpreters to keep on explaining things to them.

Q. You see a lot of western films. Do you think they portray the life of the west correctly? The life you see shown on these western films, you think that is a true representation of the life of the west?

A. I don't know, Sir. But I think from the Indian point of view, in the way they are shown they may be shown or they may be brought down in its proper form, but amongst Indians some times you look down upon some of these forms, Sir.

Q. Yes, I was only wanting to know whether you yourself considered that life as shown on the films was life as lived in the west. You have not been abroad yourself?

A. No, Sir, I have not. But at the same time, I should say generally the worst life of the ladies and things like that—we don't know whether that is a good representation.

Q. You are inclined to think that it is likely to bring about a certain amount of disrespect for women?

A. I think we must have respect for the feminine class, and the way in which they are shown brings them a bit low down.

*Mr. Noyy:* You would like the censorship insist to cutting out a certain amount of scenes which misrepresent or bring disrespect to women?

A. Yes. I would be in favour of respect for every woman anywhere.

Q. Is there an Islamia College here?

A. Yes.

Q. How many students are there?

A. The Islamia College is not here. It is at a distance of about 4 or 5 miles from the Cantonment.

Q. The students do not go to the cinemas?

A. I have seen very few of them.

*Chairman:* Do you get any English dramatic troupes, revues, and such like things, here?

A. They do come here. Then they perform for two or three nights or so at a time in one of the cinemas here.

Q. What is your opinion of what you see there on the stage, of the women there?

A. It is quite all right for people who are grown up. You mean the English theatres generally?

Q. Yes. I do not mean the amateur ones, but dramatic troupes and so on.

A. Whenever they have been here, there has usually been a rush to secure admission even on the part of the Indians—I mean the educated classes.

Q. What effect had it on your mind about womanhood there?

A. Upon the Indian mind I think the effect is the reverse of good, because we found them nearly half naked.

Q. Then you have the same objection to the theatres also?

A. Yes.

### **Written Statement of AGHA SARDAR ALI KHAN, Extra Assistant Commissioner.**

#### *Introductory.*

1. No.

#### *General.*

2. (a) (i) In my experience educated Indians are not frequent visitors of Cinemas.

(ii) Uneducated classes do frequent Cinemas.

My answer refers to Peshawar and Bannu districts particularly and to the North-West Frontier Province generally.

(b) The audience is generally composed in the following ratio 15 per cent. educated and the rest illiterate. The majority of the audience is male except at the exhibition of religious films where Hindu ladies also attend in small numbers. For ladies separate shows are arranged. The majority of the visitors are Hindus. Chinese in Cantonments are attended mostly by Officers and soldiers (British).

(c) One-third of the audience consists of children under 18 which is impressionable age.

#### **PART I.**

#### *Film industry in India.*

3. As most of the audience consists of the uneducated class, the films that appeal to them are adventurous, serials, comics and Indian religious films and dramas relating to oriental stories.

4. No, because most of the Indian visitors go after cheap price.

5. The question applies more to an exhibitor than to a visitor.

(a) A few of them are of good quality.

(b) Those few of good quality are indeed popular.

(c) It is ordinarily less profitable to show Indian than a Western film.

6. (a) It depends upon the quality of the film and actors.

(b) Historic, national, and topical Indian news would appeal to the educated classes, and religious and mythological films to the illiterate; because the educated know the former and the illiterate have blind faith in the latter.

7-13. No experience.

14. Yes, to very great extent.

Yes.

## PART II.

*Social aspects and control.*

24. (a) Generally speaking, these films have a demoralising and injurious effect and particularly so upon the younger generation of impressionable age.

(b) There is not a general circulation of criminal suggestive or immoral films but the illiterate people cannot understand them and therefore carry immoral and criminal suggestions.

(c) Films depicting entirely love affairs and sexual relations consisting of too much kissing and embracing are harmful to young and adolescents.

(d) From the Indian point of view the censorship should be more rigorous.

(e) Yes, to some extent.

(f) I can't quote any specific instance but from my general experience as a Magistrate I can say that in theft cases, particularly by juveniles, their method of stealing shows a feature peculiar to cinema films.

25. See answer to question 24 (d).

26. (a), (b) Must.

27. (a) Yes, spread of free and compulsory education.

(b) I don't know.

28. See answer to question 24 (c).

29. Yes.

30. Yes, between 10 and 14.

31. To a great extent.

32. I don't know.

33. (a), (b), (c) I don't think so.

34-35. I have no knowledge about it.

36-39. I have no knowledge of it.

40. No. I have not noticed any.

41. Yes, to some extent.

42. I have no suggestions to make.

43. I don't know.

44. Yes, by fair and sound criticism both in the press and on the platform.

45. (a) No.

(b) Yes.

### **Oral Evidence of AGHA SADAR ALI KHAN, Extra Assistant Commissioner, Bannu, on Wednesday, the 30th November 1927.**

*Chairman:* You have been an Extra Assistant Commissioner for some years?

A. Yes.

Q. Where have you served?

A. In the whole province.

Q. You do not think educated Indians go to the cinema much?

A. Not much.

Q. Where do you go yourself?

A. I generally go to the cinemas in the city and sometimes here in the Cantonment also. In Bannu there is only one cinema and I generally go there. I am now posted at Bannu.

Q. Is Bannu is there a permanent theatre?

A. Yes.

Q. How long has it been running?

A. For the last 4 or 5 years.

Q. Is it very popular there?

A. Yes. There are two shows there. To the first show the Indians generally go, and the British troops and Officers go to the second show, after dinner.

Q. What sort of show is there in Bannu? Do they show both western and Indian films?

A. They show both, but they cannot get enough Indian films. They show one or two Indian films in the month.

Q. Are they very popular?

A. To some extent they are. Some of them I have seen. Films like "The Light of Asia," "Taj Mahal," "Turki-Hoor," "Shirin Farhad"—these were liked by Mussalmans.

Q. And also by the Hindus?

A. Not so much. "Savitri," "Harishchandra," "Balkrishna," "Pati-Bhakti"—these appealed to the Hindus.

Q. Based upon anecdotes with which each is familiar?

A. Yes. I have come from Bannu to give evidence to-day. I had been here for about 4 years, and I was transferred to Bannu last July.

Mr. Neogy: Did you come here expressly to give evidence?

A. Yes.

Chairman: What are the prices in Bannu?

A. 4 annas, 8 annas, one rupee and two rupees, but generally people go to the cheaper classes.

Q. You say in answer to question No. 24 (a) "Generally speaking, these films have a demoralising effect, particularly so upon the younger generation of impressionable age."

A. Because illiterate people generally go there. So they generally take away with them immoral and criminal suggestions from the show.

Q. That is from the western films or the Indian films?

A. From the western films, and even in the Indian film I may say this. In "The Thief of Bagdad", on one side they show the Khalifa, a Muslim, and a thief taking away the daughter of the Muslim Khalifa. People do not like it.

Q. Is it they do not like it or has it any bad effect on them?

A. Both. They think that.....

Q. They think they can do it themselves?

A. Yes.

Q. You think they always want to do the same thing?

A. What they see in the cinema they try to put into practice. You may have seen boys climbing up the cars.

Q. I suppose they were climbing up the dog carts before and running after carriages is a very common thing amongst the youngsters.

A. It is not so in this province. I know, for example, Sir George Roos-Keppel once went to the city to distribute allowances to the independent territory people and for his sake the road was kept clean and his driver was a very good chauffeur. As soon as the car started, a boy climbed behind the car thinking that he would get down after a distance. But when he found that the car did not stop he began to cry and weep. Sir George Roos-Keppel was surprised to see a boy behind, weeping. He stopped the car, sent for the parents of the boy and gave them Rs. 50 in order to give the boy a ride in a motor car.

Q. When was this?

A. About 1915 or 1916 or 1917.

Q. Was there any cinema then?

A. Yes. In Bannu, I may say as a magistrate, that these boys learn pick-pocketing, going into the house through the windows and skylights for stealing, through these cinema shows.

Q. It is your guess as to how they must have learnt these?

A. Yes. I think so.

Q. Why do you say that it is ordinarily less profitable to show an Indian film than a western film?

A. Because the acting is not so good.

Q. I am asking you as regards the audience, box-office receipts.

A. Everyone wants to see good acting, good films and good pictures. Western films are nicely shown, and their movements are quick.

Q. You think people have a fancy for western films more than for Indian films?

A. I think so.

Q. Even the Indian audiences?

A. Yes, except some of these good shows.

Q. But what are the bad ones that you have seen among Indian films?

A. I do not quite remember them, because they are so many.

Q. How many Indian films have you seen altogether?

A. I think about 20 or 25, and I have selected the ones I liked.

Q. You agree with the last witness that there should be some demarcation between adults and children. Some films should be marked "only for adults"?

A. I think it is a good idea, but we cannot do that. It will be very difficult for the ticket collectors and ticket sellers.

Q. As an administrative officer you will find it difficult?

A. Yes.

Q. I suppose you know of no cases where the cinema has actually produced bad results on any particular individual?

A. I have already said that I cannot quote any example, but as far as I remember, here in the cantonment a theft occurred in the shop of a tailor. One of the thieves had entered the shop through the skylights. The doors were closed.

Q. Do you mean to say that there was no case of a thief entering through a window or skylight before the cinema came?

A. They used to break the wall with axes and so on.

Q. I suppose films depicting love affairs and sex relations unduly and the practice of too much kissing and embracing,—you do not think it is harmful to you or to me?

A. No, not at all, not even to the educated people.

Q. You say, it is not harmful in itself, but it is harmful to certain people. That is your point?

A. To the young people.

Q. Then how will you define young people?

A. From the age of 12 to the age of 18.

Q. You want to prevent these people from going to see those films?

A. I do not think it will have any effect in stopping them from going there.

Q. Not that it is harmful in itself,—that is not your objection?

A. No.

Q. What do you mean when you say that from the Indian point of view the censorship should be more rigorous?



A. That those parts—just as you may have seen in “Yusuf Zuleka” where there is a show in which they have a scene misrepresenting the Prophet Joseph,—may be cut off.

Mr. Neogy: Where was it produced?

A. I do not quite remember. There is another in “The Queen of Sheba,” misrepresenting the Prophet Solomon. From the Muhammadan point of view I may say the prophets never do these things.

Chairman: So that it is due to the ignorance of the producer?

A. I do not know. I would suggest that on the Board of Censors there may be a man from the Frontier too, because the views in Bombay and Calcutta are different from those in the Frontier.

Q. Even in the Frontier Province I suppose there will be different views. For instance, between you and Mr. Lawther there is a good deal of difference.

A. I am only speaking from the Indian point of view.

Q. The remedy is the spread of free and compulsory education?

A. Education is the thing.

Q. You think that the film also should be used for educating the people?

A. Yes.

Q. You think that Government should spend money in producing such films?

A. Yes.

Q. For spreading knowledge among the people?

A. Yes.

Q. Have you noticed in your experience any trouble on account of any films shown in this province?

A. I do not think so.

Q. On account of Hindu-Muslim feeling or anything of that sort?

A. No.

Q. Or on account of the frontier and trans-frontier?

A. No.

Colonel Crawford: I have only one question to ask. Is the cinema growing in popularity in the province?

A. Yes.

Q. Markedly?

A. Yes.

Mr. Green: You would like to see more rigorous censorship, amongst others, of certain films which you do not like?

A. Yes.

Q. What remedy actually do you suggest?

A. I have already answered.

Q. That the censorship should be more strict?

A. Yes, and a man from this province should be on the Board also.

Q. Could we afford an officer from this province stationed in Bombay, another in Calcutta, another in Madras, another in Rangoon, etc.?

A. I think so. Already there is an officer from the Frontier Province at Calcutta and in Bombay a C. I. D. officer.

Q. You mean that they should take the advice of officers already there?

A. Yes. Instead of an Inspector they could send a Gazetted officer and he could be on the Censor Board also.

Q. You realise that the members of the Committee cannot see every film? As a matter of fact, the Inspector in Bombay is not a Police Inspector. He is an officer drawing Rs. 500 a month.

A. I do not say that every film should be examined, but some of the films—religious films and films like that.

Q. Have you ever brought to the notice of the Deputy Commissioner any objectionable film?

A. There was no objectionable film here.

Q. The District Magistrate has power to suspend any film, and you, as one of his assistants, I imagine, would approach him if you had any doubt about any film?

A. Yes.

Q. But you have not in point of fact?

A. No.

Q. Then what is your objection to the censorship?

A. Because I have seen these films in Lahore, Pindi and other places.

Q. Not in your province?

A. No, except those two films which I have mentioned.

Q. Did you report those films?

A. There was no after-effect.

Q. If there was no after-effect does it not rather show that the film was properly passed and it was unnecessary to interfere with it?

A. I cannot say. The illiterate people do not understand these films generally. They do not know what is shown there. It was only about the educated classes that I said that they think that a Prophet should not have been shown making love to a woman and so on.

Q. Do you think it has any very evil effect on them?

A. Not very much.

Q. If the illiterate do not understand it and the literate do not mind it or are not affected by it, there does not seem to be very much reason to object to?

A. I do not know.

Mr. Coatman: Where are you stationed?

A. In Bannu.

Q. When were you in Mansehra?

A. I was twice at Mansehra, once from 1916 to 1919 and again from 1920 to 1923.

Q. I remember there was a travelling show proposed to be held at Mansehra.

A. Yes. That was only a local show. They called it not a cinema but a bioscope. They hired a place and showed it to the people. It was not so popular. That was run by Faredun, Budmash.

Q. It was not popular?

A. No.

Q. When was that?

A. In 1916-1917.

Q. Do you think there will be any better chance of its being more popular now?

A. I do not think so, because the population of Mansehra is not much.

Q. Are there any travelling shows in Bannu?

A. No.

Q. Do you think there is any scope at present for travelling cinemas there?

A. I do not think so.

Q. Do you think the people of your district will be interested in educational films if Government sent them round or had them prepared?

A. If it be free, probably they will go, but if on payment, I do not think they will like it.

Q. Have you any idea as to whether they really appreciate that sort of thing?

A. I do not think so.

Mr. Neogy: You have come from Bannu. The Manager of the Frontier Cinema at Bannu has submitted a written statement. Perhaps he is not coming. There is one statement there which I could not understand. I want you to help me in understanding it. "Our audiences generally average about 75 per cent. illiterate.....for whose purpose we employ a demonstrator." What is exactly the function of the demonstrator?

A. The people do not like the demonstrator because they shout at him, stop, stop.

Q. What does he do?

A. He explains the titles there.

Q. Does he do it also in connection with the western films?

A. I do not think so.

Chairman: The people do not like that demonstrator because it interferes with their following the film?

A. Yes. These illiterate people can follow more than the educated people, because they know the story.

Mr. Neogy: About censorship, you said that the standard which may be good for Bombay may not be suitable for this province. Would you be prepared to accept the standard which is good enough for the Punjab, for instance, because in the Punjab they have just started a Board of Censors. Do you think you could accept that without any difficulty?

A. I do not agree with that, because there is difference between the Punjab people and the Frontier people.

Q. You want some discrimination to be made for the benefit of this province only?

A. Yes.

Q. Not that the standard suited to this province should be made to suit other provinces also? That is not your idea?

A. No.

Q. About the classification of films and marking certain films for adults only, you said it would not be practicable. That is all you have to say against that?

A. Yes.

Q. Is there any other objection?

A. No.

Q. If it could be practicable, you would be prepared to support it?

A. I think it is quite impossible to make it practicable.

Q. What would be your remedy?

A. Education.

Q. That is all?

A. Yes. Free education.

Q. I was interested in what the Australians do in this matter. This is what a report says: "It would undoubtedly be a great mistake to bring the use of the movies down to the level of a child's entertainment." You do not want that?

A. No.

Q. Then they say, "It may ultimately be necessary to classify films and pass some for adult audiences only".

A. They might do that, but we cannot do it.

**Oral Evidence of MUFTI ABDUL LATIFF, Munsif, Peshawar, on  
Wednesday, the 30th November 1927.**

*Chairman:* You are a District Munsif here?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you go to the cinema often?

A. I do.

Q. Where do you go?

A. Both to the cantonment and the Peshawar city.

Q. Where do you go more often?

A. I do not make much difference between the two. Wherever I hear of a good film being shown I go.

Q. I suppose more often the western films shown in the cantonment are shown in the city cinemas also?

A. Yes.

Q. First the western films make their appearance in the cantonment?

A. Yes.

Q. And then they go to the city?

A. That is their arrangement, that is, of the cinema owners.

Q. You see the same film which has been shown in the cantonment is shown in the city?

A. I do not remember. If I see a film in the cantonment, I won't go to see it again in the city.

Q. What sort of people go to the cantonment cinemas?

A. British troops and residents of the cantonment.

Q. I suppose very few Indians go there?

A. Yes. But the present day tendency is that the more educated Indians who want to go to a quiet house go to the cantonment cinemas.

Q. Do you mean to say that there is not much noise in the cantonment cinemas?

A. None at all,—not that hooting that one experiences in the city cinemas.

Q. Probably they enjoy it more in the city.

A. According to their standard of enjoyment!

Q. We have rather to pity them than otherwise. We do not do it because we are a sedate sort of people. You do not call it hooting, what they shout there?

A. Where they see a crook on the film they start hooting. There is actually hooting.

Q. Are you satisfied on the whole with the films you get in Peshawar?

A. I have no special complaint to make except the question that has been repeated by the previous witnesses, that is, age.

Q. You mean children should not see some of the things which are shown there?

A. Yes.

Q. Whether British or Indian children?

A. It ought to be common.

Q. From your point of view it ought to be common?

A. Yes, if they are of impressionable age.

Q. What age would you advocate?

A. I think 14 to 16.

Q. Below 16?

A. Yes.

**Q.** You want to mark certain films "for adults" and to prevent boys and girls under 16 from going to see them—that is your idea?

**A.** There are not many girls who go to the city cinema; in fact there are no girls.

**Q.** How would you mark such films—"only for adults above the age of 16"?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** You know in this country it is very difficult to tell the age of a boy or a girl.

**A.** Yes, it would be difficult but it would not be impossible to define their age roughly.

**Q.** I mean, of course, those who are under 12 could be excluded though it may be difficult to make a distinction between 12 and 16. But what machinery would you have to find out what a child's age is? How are you to know? How is the exhibitor to know? What he is to do?

**A.** There must be some check at the entrance gate—that is all.

**Q.** You must trust to the judgment of the exhibitor?

**A.** Yes, it would not be possible to do anything else.

**Q.** But still, by itself, you think it will have some effect: when they know there is such a check, the boys or girls who dare will be very few. That is your point of view?

**A.** Yes, that is my point of view.

**Q.** You think, from your knowledge of the films you see, that such a classification is essential? You think the evil is so great as to necessitate a departure of that sort?

**A.** I don't think the evil produced so far has been so large, but I think the impression that the youths of tender age get from certain films would not be very beneficial for their future careers.

**Q.** But, of course, if they are students and so on, they get some of these ideas from the novels they read.

**A.** In my view there is much difference between novel reading and seeing a thing in the cinema. In the one case one's own brain is reasoning things out, while in the other the actual thing is shown on the screen, which is quite different.

**Q.** You advocate it not because the evil that has already been worked has been large but because of the evil that is likely to be produced?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** I suppose you advocate the introduction of educational films in the country. I mean public utility films?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** You advocate that Government should take steps to produce such films?

**A.** I do.

**Q.** Is your Government rich enough to do it?

**A.** That I cannot say.

**Q.** Will they be prepared to spend the money?

**Mr. Neogy:** Provided they get it from the Government of India; they have no separate purse of their own.

**Chairman:** Of course, you are not now self-supporting. Anyway, you would like Government to do something in that direction?

**A.** I would.

**Q.** And therefore, having regard to the peculiarity of the financial position of your province, would you advocate various provincial Governments pooling their resources, so that this being of common utility, may be carried out at a common centre and distributed to the various provinces?

A. That would be a better method, from my point of view, of meeting this expenditure.

Q. Anyway, some effort should be made by Government to produce such films?

A. I think so.

Q. Your people would welcome it?

A. Yes, in my opinion, they would—specially the agricultural films!

Q. They need it, their lack of knowledge is so great?

A. There has now been a Government Agricultural Farm in this place for so many years, but I don't think 3 per cent. of the people know that there is any demonstration going on.

Q. That is not peculiar to your province. We have experimental farms in our province but, notwithstanding our so-called superiority in educational matters, we are in the same position as yourself.

A. That is news to me.

Q. I don't think they carry it to the farmer; they don't carry the knowledge which is to be had at these experimental farms to the farmer to the extent that they ought to.

A. I don't think so.

Q. So you would advocate the introduction of such a course? Now, I want to know your opinion—do you think students in your province would go in for a vocational class, if it is opened, for, say, training them in cinema acting, photography, etc.?

A. I cannot express an opinion about it.

Q. Who is your educational expert here? Who is the educational officer?

A. The Director of Public Instruction.

Q. The same Director of Public Instruction as in the Punjab or have you got a separate one?

A. Separate.

Q. Some other departments you have in common with the Punjab, and so I thought you had the same Director.

A. We have a separate officer by the name of Mr. Towle, as Director of Public Instruction.

Q. Is there anyone in charge of industry in your province?

A. I think the Revenue Commissioner must be in charge. I do not know of any other officer.

Q. You are generally satisfied with the censorship as it is now performed?

A. I think it should be a bit stricter.

Q. I thought you suggested that you only want certain films marked "for adults only".

A. If that is done.....

Q. To what extent you mean?

A. Yes.

Q. Not that the film is harmful in itself but it may be harmful.....

A. It may be harmful to impressionable children under 16.

Q. In other respects it is all right?

A. As far as I have seen, yes.

Q. One can only give one's own impression in these matter. So that is what you feel?

A. Yes.

*Colonel Crawford:* I would like to hear your frank criticism on the Indian produced film—are you satisfied with it?

A. I have not seen many of them. I happened to see only one "Turki Hoor," and I thought that quite a fair film.

**Q.** Were you satisfied with it?

**A.** I was.

**Q.** Does the Western film satisfy you, the type of story?

**A.** I have no special objection to it.

**Q.** No particular objection against it? Do you consider the life they show to be the life of the West?

**A.** I have not been to the West so I cannot exactly say.

**Q.** What do you feel yourself?

**A.** There might be some exaggeration, but, as I have not been to the West I cannot definitely say what difference there is and to what extent it is exaggerated.

**Mr. Green:** You are chiefly concerned with safeguarding children and adolescents from the evil effect of the film?

**A.** Yes, Sir.

**Q.** And the only method you can suggest is that certain films should be certified only for adults?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** There is a contrary suggestion possible, that certain films should be certified as fit for children. Do you see any objection to that being done? If a thing is certified for adults only it may prove attractive to the very classes we want to stop. The adolescent or boy will say he is just over 16, although he is not, and in any case the difference between 15 and 16 may be very small. Is there not rather a danger if you say "certified for adults only" that you would draw all the people of an impressionable age to the cinema just to see what it is?

**A.** If there is proper arrangement to stop them I think there would not be much harm.

**Mr. Coatsman:** Are you yourself very fond of going to the cinema?

**A.** Just for a change.

**Q.** How often do you go?

**A.** Twice or thrice a month.

**Q.** Do you go with friends?

**A.** If I have any with me at the time when I am going.

**Q.** What subjects please you most when you see them on the screen? You personally.

**A.** Well, comic and adventure pictures and well played dramas.

**Q.** What sort of dramas? You say "well played dramas", but dramas can be on varied subjects. Drama is a very general term.

**A.** I don't exactly remember what I have seen.

**Q.** Well, would you say you prefer films with a good deal of action in them?

**A.** I think so.

**Q.** Where somebody is doing something. Anyway you would rather have a comic or an adventure scene than a love scene. You know the ordinary American film goes in a good deal for love scenes. Do those attract you?

**A.** Well, if such scenes come on on the day I happen to go to the cinema, of course, I stay on. If I know beforehand that there is to be that sort of acting I might refrain.

**Q.** Therefore, when you are asked which films you prefer, you would say comic and adventure films.

**A.** Yes, Sir.

**Mr. Neogy:** What percentage, roughly speaking, of the audience is composed of children under 16?

**A.** I think from 10 to 15 per cent.

**Q.** As much as that? I find the manager of the Frontier Cinema at Bannu said 3 or 4 per cent.

**A.** That might be the case at Bannu. I am speaking of Peshawar.

**Q.** And out of that number I think some are accompanied by their parents, specially the younger ones.

**A.** Yes, the younger ones are accompanied by their parents.

**Q.** So in those cases it is more for the parents to see that they don't take their children to undesirable shows?

**A.** Provided the parents know beforehand what is going to be shown on the screen.

**Q.** The parents themselves don't know?

**A.** Yes, they don't know.

**Q.** Now, if there were certain pictures exclusively advertised for adults, don't you think that parents at least would prevent their children from going to these shows?

**A.** They would, if they know that this is going to be for adults.

**Q.** Now, children under 16, those who live with their parents, don't go to the cinema without their parents coming to know about it?

**A.** Yes, generally.

**Q.** So even if you were to leave the cinema manager to see that children under 16 are not allowed, even that would have its effect so far as the parents also would be helping them in a way?

**A.** It must be.

**Q.** Now about educational and agricultural and other public utility films, you stated in reply to the Chairman that if a central authority were to undertake the manufacture of films on those subjects it would be very useful; but don't you think that having regard to the differences in different provinces, having regard to provincial peculiarities, a film, say, with a Bengal setting might not make that appeal to the North-West Frontier as a film on that very subject taken in a local setting or even taken in a Punjab setting,—surroundings, scenes and the dresses of the people, modes of agriculture, implements of agriculture and things of that kind being different?

**A.** When I spoke about agricultural films, I meant recent scientific implements and demonstrations about them. That should be shown and that would be universal throughout India.

**Q.** But, apart from that, you must take into account provincial differences?

**A.** Yes, that is quite different.

### **Oral Evidence of Kazi Md. ASLAM KHAN, Pleader, Peshawar, on Wednesday, the 30th November 1927.**

*Chairman:* You are a pleader practising in Peshawar?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Do you go to the cinema often?

**A.** Yes, very often.

**Q.** When you go, where do you go? Cantonment?

**A.** I very seldom go to the cantonment. I often go to the Imperial Bioscope in Peshawar City. Formerly there was another cinema also and I used to go there.

**Q.** Why was the other cinema closed down?

**A.** That, as a matter of fact, was taken over by this other concern, the Imperial Bioscope.

**Q.** He found it more profitable to run only one?

**A.** Yes. There was competition before and he had to send for more expensive films.



**Q.** So he adopted the trick of purchasing the other cinema?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** But, if it is a paying proposition, why is it others have not taken to building new cinemas?

**A.** The local opinion among Mussulmans—Peshawar, as you know, is mainly a Mussalman town—and the local opinion among Mussulmans is that the cinema for the Mussalman is a sacrilege. I myself have suggested to a number of people, I said: "It is a quite paying concern and if some of you form a corporation and start a show of your own, it would pay". But I was met with the reply "As Mussulmans we cannot take it up".

**Q.** Yes, we had a statement from a Maulvi, who did not appear before us, that it was against their religion.

**A.** Personally I am a Mussulman but I don't put very much faith in the idea that it is against Islam.

**Q.** That is a narrow view?

**A.** Yes, absolutely.

**Q.** Still it prevails with the Mussulmans here?

**A.** Yes.

**Mr. Green:** To some extent.

**A.** To some extent.

**Chairman:** Do they go to the cinema?

**A.** Of course, they do, except the Khalifatists. They don't, and make a point of dissuading others from going.

**Q.** It is part of their programme?

**A.** Not part of their programme. They don't like it. Supposing I was talking to some of them in the street. Well, if they got a hint that I was going on to the cinema they would say "Kazi Sahib, no good going there". They consider it from the economic point of view. They consider it a waste of money.

**Q.** But what else would the people do? Supposing there was not the cinema,—what do you think they were doing before the cinema came?

**A.** They were idling away their time.

**Q.** Plotting mischief?

**A.** Exactly. I think it is a better pastime for all classes of people, educated and uneducated.

**Q.** You think it ought to be encouraged?

**A.** I think so.

**Mr. Neogy:** It keeps people away from harm?

**A.** Yes, it does.

**Chairman:** Specially in a place like this where they would perhaps be talking communal matters if they were not spending their time at the cinema?

**A.** I might myself enlighten you on that point because I am connected with a number of communal institutions and you might be interested in my answer to that. My answer to that is that there is not so much communal talk here in Peshawar as we notice elsewhere in the press, down-country. Here at quite distant times we do come across certain meetings being held; but even at those meetings the communal tension is not so very keen as we observe it elsewhere. This is a peculiarity of Peshawar.

**Q.** I noticed that when I was here last, but since then I thought some change had come about.

**A.** I beg your pardon, we are in much happier conditions here than anywhere else in India.

**Q.** It was so in 1922 when I was here, the two communities were very friendly.

**A.** We are very friendly even now.

*Q.* I suppose you have not heard of any communal objection being taken to any of the Indian shows?

*A.* Not "communal" correctly speaking. Of course, there was a certain film in which Sri Krishna was shown. The very first day it was shown there was a scene where Krishna was supposed to be sitting and he saw the women-folk (Gopis) having a naked bath before he took away their clothes. Some leading members of the Sanathan Dharam Sabha in Peshawar City got wind of it and then approached the proprietors of the Imperial Bioscope asking them to cut out that portion, which he did.

*Q.* It was misunderstood, but, of course, it is a true portion of Krishna's life.

*A.* Yes, their point of view was quite different. As a matter of fact I don't think that thing was objected to by another city in the east of India; but here at Peshawar at that particular time the idea of these gentlemen was that a Mussalman audience might misunderstand it and it would not be good in the interests of the Hindus to be so misunderstood.

*Q.* That was the temporary basis of the situation. Was that the only occasion?

*A.* Well, there was one other occasion on which, as Agha Sadar Ali explained to you, "The Queen of Sheba" was shown. The Mussalmans, not there in the cinema hall but next day in the city, started some talk that the prophet Solomon was being shown in such a bad light.

*Mr. Neogy:* What effect had it?

*A.* Nothing very serious.

*Q.* That was not cut out?

*A.* No.

*Chairman:* You think it was a silly objection too?

*A.* I don't think it was a silly objection from the point of view of these people. I mean if cent. per cent. of the audience were educated then, of course, they would not mind, but taking into consideration the character of the people here it would be much nicer.....

*Q.* If the producer took care?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Was it shown after that, was it continued to be shown after that?

*A.* Of course, it was—for 3 days.

*Q.* What is your estimate? Are Indian films getting more popular with the people?

*A.* Yes. I do believe that Indian films are likely to be more popular provided they are of the right sort.

*Q.* Without rousing communal tension and offending religious feelings; if care is taken in that direction, you think Indian films will become more and more popular?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Do you think there is any chance of Indian films being produced in your province?

*A.* As a matter of fact our province, from my own point of view, is very rich in natural scenery and all that sort of thing.

*Q.* Historically you could produce the story of different invasions and various scenes?

*A.* I have got a proviso added to it. You know we are a very poor province and any concern of that sort to be started here, from my point of view, is an impossibility. We have got very few people whom we could call capitalists, and those would rather prefer to hoard up their money in the earth or lend it at exorbitant rates of interest than invest it in such a thing.

*Q.* Yes, of course, that is the tendency, but on the other hand you have here plenty of scope for developing the film industry; in your province I mean there are certain natural advantages.

A. Yes, we have natural advantages.

Q. And would you welcome some effort being made to produce films?

A. I would welcome it with pleasure.

Q. And would you also welcome Government aid, direct or indirect, in order to develop that industry?

A. Quite so.

Q. Even if it is a help to people outside your province from other parts of India?

A. I would be rather pleased.

Q. How do you like the idea of every cinema, in order to encourage the growth of the film industry in the country, being compelled to show a certain percentage of Indian films.

A. Well, I would very much like that, but I have certain objections. I mean those objections, of course, that there should be nothing done in the way of creating communal tension.

Q. So long, of course, as they are proper films. Supposing it was like this—Indian films passed by a certain representative board as fit for universal exhibition, then you would advocate such films being made compulsory to show them at every cinema? The board, of course, would be a representative board representing all communities.

A. Of course.

Q. Not every Indian produced film but certain Indian films which are certified as such?

A. Yes.

Q. You know in England they are now adopting, in order to encourage the Empire film industry, a quota system, compelling every exhibitor and renter to do so. You think such a thing would be useful to the growth of the industry?

A. I think so.

Q. Do you think you can get the people in your province to take part in Indian productions? Do you think there will be any difficulty in getting people in your province as actors and actresses?

A. So far as actors are concerned there will be no difficulty, but so far as actresses are concerned there will be some difficulty.

Q. Actresses I know there will be great difficulty about.

A. I may tell you one thing about the people, it is a characteristic peculiar to the people of the North-West Frontier Province. Enterprising people you find among us. You find people of this province knocking about in Bombay, Madras, Calcutta and everywhere, and if they find that this particular aspect of business is going to pay, the chances are they will take it up and develop it.

Q. For instance, take these travelling tribes, the Kuchis. You think they will take part in acting?—if they are paid of course.

A. They will do anything for payment.

Q. Even women, you think you might get them to act?

A. Yes, in minor parts.

Q. I also think so, because these women are very free. They go down even so far South as Madras. I think they will make good actors and actresses if you only give them a little bit of training.

A. Yes, they would do in such parts as show their own national life.

Q. I mean that sort of thing. Are you satisfied with the standard of films now shown? I do not mean Indian films, but generally the moral tone of all films?

A. Well, taking into consideration the fact that there is a certain percentage of children and that there is a certain percentage of absolutely

illiterate people visiting the shows, I am not absolutely satisfied with the moral tone of the films.

*Q.* That is to say, you think there is too much of nudity shown?

*A.* There is too much what we call sensuousness on the screen.

*Q.* It may be true to life or it may not be true to life?

*A.* Well, the idea is that, taking into consideration our own civilisation, our own modes of living and our own peculiar ideas, that sort of exhibition goes rather to demoralise, rather than elevate us. Of course, if the people were educated that sort of thing would certainly not produce the least possible effect.

*Q.* From that point of view, with due respect to you, I do not see any difference between educated and uneducated.

*A.* My point is this. If an educated man sees an actor come forward and hug and kiss a girl, an actress, well, he will take it as a very ordinary thing. He would not mind it in the least. Possibly he has seen that sort of thing himself, his own personal experience or something of the sort. He would not take it very seriously in any case. But on the other hand it will make a bad impression on an absolutely illiterate man, say, a hooligan, who will say "There you are".

*Q.* Have you come across such a case, or is it your apprehension that it will have that effect?

*A.* It is my apprehension, yes.

*Q.* Not one such case has really occurred in your experience?

*A.* Not exactly in my observation.

*Q.* You want censorship to be tightened a bit in that direction?

*A.* Yes, but I would prefer censorship to be regulated according to the needs of every province.

*Q.* Have you considered the difficulties if we accept your suggestion? Even as it is, the Indian exhibitors complain that they get films very late, and if they have to submit their film to censorship in every province, in all the nine provinces, don't you think it will act as a damper on the trade?

*A.* I may inform the committee that the films that we get here are really not fresh films. They come to us sometimes after they have been in use for years in other parts of India or elsewhere.

*Q.* But getting every film passed through censorship in every province means so much more fees to the censoring authorities? Do you think it will be good for the trade?

*A.* It won't be bad for the trade.

*Q.* Are you satisfied with the present system, that where a film is found objectionable, the Deputy Commissioner can suspend it?

*A.* It is very seldom that a film of that character is brought to the notice of the Deputy Commissioner, because he himself does not go to the shows.

*Q.* He has got eyes and ears?

*A.* Of course, he has.

*Q.* Does it not show that the censorship existing now is adequate?

*A.* I have not come across, in Peshawar, any film which has been banned.

*Q.* You think the films should be censored in every province?

*A.* I gave you an instance of "The Queen of Sheba" and the scene about Krishna. I think the authorities should have raised the objections instead of the public. The authorities have got the help of the police and they can put things in the proper light.

*Q.* The police should be aided by the public?

*A.* They ought to be.

*Q.* Does not the very fact that no such objection has been taken prove that the censorship is adequate?

A. It would be a perfectly correct inference indirectly, but not directly.

Q. You recognise that it is not possible to satisfy the taste of every citizen, but you must see what is good for the bulk of the people?

A. Exactly. But there is one instance in point. For example, at the present moment there is a certain theatre which is giving its performance outside the Bujori Gate. In fact every year we get some sort of Indian theatrical companies. But there is a condition precedent in the license issued by the cantonment authority here, as directed by the local police and by the District Magistrate, that 24 hours before the show is staged, it will have to be passed by an officer appointed by the District Magistrate in that behalf. In those circumstances....no show could be staged which has a tendency either to bring about communal tension or excite communal feelings or which is in any way objectionable. There is somebody responsible for that sort of thing. If such control has been considered to be a salutary method to prevent trouble so far in regard to theatres, I see no reason why a similar control should not be exercised over cinemas.

Q. In the one case there is censorship already exercised, because no film is accepted which has not passed through the Censorship Board?

A. As against that, I may point out to the Committee that every drama to be staged by a theatrical company may have been staged elsewhere. It has got printed books. But yet a drama passed at Lahore may not be passed by the Frontier authorities.

Q. I would consider it hard myself if I were running a theatre that I should be showing every show to the local police man before it is accepted, if every actor or actresses has to act for the benefit of the policeman?

A. They have to act for their own livelihood.

Q. It is rather news to me that Indian dramas are being first seen by the authorities. But are the English troupes also subjected to this restriction?

A. But English troupes don't visit this province,—perhaps one may come once in three or four years,—but they are not subjected to any such hardship.

Q. Do you mean to say that an Indian theatrical company has to give a private performance to the police before they stage it openly?

A. No. They have to send a copy of the drama, I mean a synopsis of the drama, to the police beforehand for their inspection.

Q. I suppose you believe in educational films, and you think that every effort should be made to produce them in larger numbers?

A. Yes.

*Colonel Crawford:* Can you give me any idea whether you noticed any direct educative value ensuing from the cinema in Peshawar, and is it gradually affecting the people?

A. There are certain films which show things connected with chemistry.

Q. I was wondering whether you had noticed any gradual effect in Peshawar of any educative value, intellectual benefits in any direction?

A. I could not give you any idea.

Q. In reply to the Chairman you said that you have no objection to the increase in the growth of cinemas if the films were of a certain type. What sort of films have you in mind?

A. I should like to have historical films depicting ancient and modern history, films which will show the manners and customs and civilisations of the people of Madras or Bengal to the people in Peshawar or Hazara district or to other districts in this province. If I can't afford to travel down to Madras or Bengal, I could at least see in the cinema what sort of people they are and what their customs and manners are. Then again, being an agriculturist and being interested in the cultivation of tobacco and the manufacture of cigars, I could see how these things are made in other parts of India; we could also see, if there is a film dealing with the manufacture of sugarcane and its products, how sugarcane is dealt with in the more advanced provinces. The generality of the Indian audience would much rather

prefer to see historical films, films of adventure and so on, but it is doubtful if we have really any films of adventure.

*Q.* I should think from the stories of your raiders you could make any number of films?

*A.* Yes, I see it every day.

*Q.* I am rather interested in what you say, because you lay stress on the necessity of the Indian producer taking into consideration the communal, religious and provincial feelings when he attempts to make a film, but if he does so, there is not much left for him?

*A.* That is so, unfortunately.

*Q.* Do you think the film will be an effective method of removing some of the differences that exist between communities?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* But you think that the conditions at present are such that you must have certain restrictions?

*A.* Yes.

*Mr. Green:* You think the films must be cut out if they are disliked by anybody?

*A.* I don't say by anybody, but if they are disliked by the generality. I may be an odd sort of man and I may not like a particular film. But that does not mean that you should ban the whole film, but it should be for the Government to see whether a certain film can be allowed to be shown to the public without offending anybody.

*Mr. Neogy:* The standard you advocate would be exactly that which would suit the uneducated?

*A.* If we give offence to them, there will be broken heads.

*Mr. Green:* If a film is so censored, there will be nothing left but titles!

*Colonel Crawford:* Take the film prepared by the Punjab Co-operative Credit Society. In that film the moneylender's part is taken by a Hindu, and consequently the film is likely to be banned. Do you advocate it?

*A.* I would not call it bad because that represents a fact. You can depict the Pathan moneylender in Bengal in exactly the same position. But here we are not concerned with Hindu or Muhammedan. We are concerned with the moneylender in Bengal. I know that the Afghans who go over there lend money perhaps at such exorbitant rates that even the Hindu moneylender here would not dream of getting such rates.

*Chairman:* Why don't they compete with the Hindu moneylenders here?

*A.* I would not like him to compete here because his methods of recovery are a little rough. There is also the stigma of usury attached in these parts.

*Mr. Green:* You told the Chairman that you would like to see a quota of Indian films in every cinema in India. I take it that before you advocate it there must be Indian films?

*A.* Are there not enough?

*Q.* Apart from that, you would not force a cinema to close down because it could not get an Indian film for, say, three or four months?

*A.* I think if a condition precedent were made, a demand would be created and as a result there would be a supply forthcoming.

*Q.* But until that supply is assured, you will be content with a very small quota?

*A.* I still believe in creating a demand and there will be a natural supply.

*Q.* With regard to your point about censorship by provinces, when a man buys or imports or makes a film, he has in view a certain market, and the average Indian producer or importer has in view the whole of the Indian market, and the bigger the market the higher the price, and therefore the better picture. Now the difficulty in adopting your suggestion would be this, a man would not dare to make a good picture because he may say that it

may be passed by Bombay but it may not be passed by Bengal. Don't you think it would damage the industry if every province is to have its own censorship?

A. The idea is that a thing which is good enough for A may be good enough for B, but it is not necessary that it should be good enough for B, and even if it is good enough for B, he won't have it. In such a case, of course, the producer will be loser. For instance, you might know that "Turki Hoor" worked very well in other provinces in India, but when it came to Lahore, it was chucked out by the District Magistrate.

Q. I think the first objection was taken in Sind?

A. That supports my point. The Bombay Board passed it.

Q. According to you, you may want not merely inter-provincial censor Boards but you may want censors for each division?

A. I would not like to go to such lengths.

Mr. Neogy: You stated that there were some objectionable scenes in "The Queen of Sheba" and in "The Life of Krishna." Are you sure that if under your scheme, those films had to be shown to a police officer before being permitted to be shown publicly they would have been taken exception to by the policeman? z

A. It all depends upon the qualifications of a police officer. If he is a head constable with an education up to the 4th class, he may not be conscious of the defects, but if he is a man possessing the abilities of Mr. Coatman, the position would be different.

Q. Now the scene in "The Life of Krishna," as the Chairman pointed out to you, was true to tradition, and the objection was taken by the Hindus not on the ground that it misrepresented Krishna but on the ground that it may be misunderstood by the Muhammadans. Now, do you think that in a case like this, the police officer would be able to give all that consideration to the point?

A. Have I given you the impression that I advocate only inspection by a single police officer? I was for the proposition that there should be a local Board of Censors who should preview all these films.

Q. I suppose you mean that there should be non-official members representing the various communities on these local Boards?

A. Yes, that is my idea.

**\*Oral Evidence of Lala KISHAN CHAND, Banker and Proprietor, Imperial Bioscope, Peshawar, on Wednesday, the 30th November 1927.**

Chairman: You are the proprietor of the Imperial Bioscope?

A. Yes.

Q. How long have you been in the cinema business?

A. Since 1921. I was a partner in the Frontier Cinema since 1921, but I left that in 1925 and started the Imperial.

Q. What do you mean by "left", if you were the owner?

A. I was one-fourth partner in that concern.

Q. And you closed your partnership and came away and opened a new cinema. That was the older one? How long has it been going now?

A. It is stopped. We have purchased that Frontier Cinema.

Q. First of all you started the Frontier, then you started your Imperial Bioscope, and now you have purchased the Frontier again and closed it?

A. It is closed in these days because we people have lost our houses in the big fire.

Q. It is on account of the fire you closed?

A. We have got no accommodation to live, and there are 6 or 7 families living there.

Q. It is not because you are making any loss, I mean by running two cinemas?

A. We always start in the winter season.

Q. Oh, you are going to reopen it again? I thought as much. Now what are the films which you show mostly?

A. We show serials and dramas of Indian manufacture.

Q. Serials of western films and dramas of Indian production?

A. We show one serial in the month and the others drama; some of high class taste and some of Indian taste.

Q. Where do you get your Indian films from?

A. From different companies, Sir,—from Bombay.

Q. Do you get any Bengal films?

A. From Bengal we get them from Madan Theatres, Ltd. We are in association with Madans.

Q. But of the Indian films, mostly from Bombay you get them?

A. And also from Madan Theatres Ltd.

Q. Are they popular here—very popular with Indians?

A. Yes, Sir.

Q. You get more audience for Indian films than for western films?

A. Yes, Sir, we get more audience for Indian films, and also we show the finer serials; we get sufficient audience.

Q. The Indian public do not care for western dramas?

A. Dramas they don't like—only educated people like them. The majority of the people we get are illiterate.

Q. They don't care for these scenes in which passionate love-making is depicted? Do the ordinary Indian audience care for it?

A. Here they don't care for it.

Q. Probably the educated class cares for it?

A. Yes, Sir.

Q. Now, have you two shows every day?

A. Two shows daily and one show at the matinee on Friday or Sunday.

Q. When you were running both the theatres, were you also doing the same thing?—two shows daily in each theatre?

A. Yes, because there was competition with us.

Q. They were competing with you and ran like yourself and both of you did well?

A. Yes.

Q. How much did you pay in order to acquire the Frontier cinema back again?

A. We paid about Rs. 18,000.

Q. You mean for the theatre and all that?

A. Not the land, only the building, and some machinery and furniture.

Q. And the goodwill?

A. Yes, Sir.

Q. And do you think there is room for more cinemas in Peshawar to come up?

A. No, Sir. In the city you can run only two.

Q. And in the cantonment?

A. There also two.

Q. Is there room for more cinemas?



A. I don't think so.

Q. You think you are satisfying the needs of the population?

A. Yes, Sir.

Q. Do you find any difficulty in getting either Indian films or western films?

A. Up to this time we have never had any difficulty.

Q. How often do you change your programme?

A. Bi-weekly.

Q. Both in the Indian films and the western films?

A. Yes, Sir. And in special cases, such as a big production, like Douglas Fairbanks, we run it for five days or a week. For very big productions.

Q. I see. If it is a very attractive one. Five days in the theatres in the city?

A. Yes.

Q. You have no experience of the cantonment?

A. We often go there too but that is for soldiers mostly.

Q. I suppose they show only western pictures there?

A. Yes, Sir, not Indian pictures.

Q. Of course, you don't get any European audience in your cinemas?

A. No, Sir.

Q. And western pictures, from whom do you get them?

A. Mostly, we get from Madan Theatres Ltd. We are in association with Madans. And sometimes when a new thing comes, if we read in the papers that it is according to the liking of the public, we offer for these pictures too.

Q. To whom? Do you get them direct?

A. No, through the agencies. The Universal or sometimes the Alliance Co. or Pathes.

Q. Do you get them from independent dealers also?

A. Yes.

Q. When you are dealing with Madans, are you obliged to book a bulk?

A. Mostly.

Q. I mean do you pay a certain amount for hire or on a percentage basis?

A. We pay a fixed hire and sometimes, for the big films, we pay on percentage.

Q. Ordinarily it is a fixed rent?

A. And similarly when we get from Pathes some big production, we get it on percentage.

Q. More often fixed rent, only occasionally you pay a percentage?

A. Yes.

Q. On an average what is the rent you pay?—not for the big productions, but for the ordinary ones which you rent?

A. It comes to Rs. 150 per programme.

Q. That is for three or four days?

A. And sometimes Rs. 200 for a programme.

Q. According to the quality of the picture, Rs. 150 or 200. But if it is a good production what do you pay for one which you can rent for five days?

A. Rs. 400 to Rs. 500. That is the highest.

Q. Now, Madans I suppose only give you those pictures after they have shown it in their own theatres?

A. They show it first in their own theatres, and sometimes we get it after it has been shown in two or three towns. We write and tell them that our house will require it; we may get it occasionally.

**Q.** But ordinarily it is only after they have done the round of all their theatres, that you get their pictures?

**A.** I can't say "all the theatres", but they send us in rotation.

**Q.** Now how many at a time have you had from them? Do you have to pay more if you take one at a time, and less if you take them in bulk. Supposing you took a dozen films. Would it pay?

**A.** We pay for each picture.

**Q.** You don't select one lot. Do they compel you to take a whole lot?

**A.** No, Sir, that lies in our choice. We always see the developments.

**Q.** You have a choice as to what you will take and they don't make any trouble about giving it to you?

**A.** Supposing we write to them that we require such and such a picture in January. If it is available they send it.

**Q.** There is no block booking? You know what is meant by block booking. So far as you are concerned with Madans you are not compelled to take a whole lot whether you like it or not?

**A.** No, Sir.

**Q.** And you know what you want? You know exactly what film you want? There is no blind booking? You have not got such a system?

**A.** No, Sir.

**Q.** And Indian pictures, are they supplied under contract with the producers or are you given a choice there also?

**A.** In the beginning we had contracts with different firms. But now we choose what we want. They send us the synopsis book, whatever it is, and we pick and choose what we want.

**Q.** And you have no difficulty in getting them?

**A.** No, Sir.

**Q.** Do you think there will be a greater demand for Indian pictures as time goes on?

**A.** Yes, Sir, it is growing in popularity.

**Q.** And if you put on an Indian picture, it brings you more money than a western picture?

**A.** Yes, Sir, because the plot is according to the taste of the people. They understand. They don't care for photography and all that, the Indian public, —or for perfection of art. The educated people may, but the ordinary Indian audience, on whom we depend, they don't care much whether it is good photography or not. They care but little so long as they can follow the plot.

**Q.** And do the audience show much appreciation of the story and all that?

**A.** Yes, Sir, they appreciate it.

**Q.** And in the western pictures do the audience follow the plot?

**A.** Yes. Because they habitually follow these scenes—particularly fighting scenes.

**Q.** But the high class subjects they don't follow at all, if it is a social drama?

**A.** The picture which has got Urdu captions they follow better, and all these Indian productions are getting Urdu captions.

**Q.** That will gladden the heart of Sir Haroon Jaffer; he is not here. Why don't you yourself try to produce films in your province? You know their popularity. Why don't you try to do it yourself?

**A.** We have tried, Sir. Last year we corresponded with Madans Theatres to get a camera, but after that we purchased the Frontier Cinema and our finances did not allow us to go further.

**Q.** So you have an idea. You think you will go in for it?

A. We have had correspondence with them and this province has many advantages—there is a lot of scenery which is quite new and will be much appreciated in the other provinces.

Q. Just as Bombay does. With all your river scenery on this side and the mountain scenery on the other side?

A. And moreover this would be appreciated down country.

Q. They will be appreciated very much if you can produce good ones. You have not tried yet?

A. No, Sir. We sent our artist to Calcutta last year.

Q. What do you mean by your artist?

A. The man who makes our photos and all these slides for advertisement purposes, and we paid him his fare and he went to Madans Theatres and learnt photography.

Q. But why don't you send him to Germany or America to learn the art?

A. Because that would cost lots of money.

Q. But surely you are making money over this cinema here? If it is a paying proposition, are you not prepared to invest more money in it?

A. No, Sir.

Q. Why? Are you afraid or shy?

A. No, Sir. I have got other partners too in this concern.

A. You don't think then, in the Frontier Province, people will be coming forth to produce films?

A. Up to this time, there has been nobody. There is a great chance.

Q. Is there a chance of people coming forward, if not now some two or three years later, to take up this industry?

A. I cannot say. Unless a man is experienced in this line, he cannot go.

Q. When you select for exhibition, you take care that you select films which are paying, therefore you don't pick much of the love-making scenes, do you?

A. Sometimes we show such pictures.

Q. And do you try to avoid them or anything of that sort?

A. The pictures we have been showing so far have not too much love, not passionate love.

Q. Why don't you exhibit the passionate love-making?

A. I think we are not getting them.

Q. Is it because your audience won't patronise it? Is that your reason?

A. We have not tried such things. The audience appreciates serials and other dramas.

Q. Has there been any attempt on the part of the police officers or others to ask for free passes?

A. Free passes we do issue, Sir.

Q. How many free passes do you issue?

A. There is no limit. All those whom we are concerned with we give free passes to.

Q. Railway people, octroi people, the Deputy Commissioner's office, excise people?

A. Excise people we have got nothing to do with.

Q. And the Licensing authority?

A. Yes, Sir, we have to issue passes.

Q. How many passes do you issue?

A. I usually give out 50 passes.

Q. Now, do students come to your cinema?

A. Yes.

**Q.** They do? From what part of the town?

**A.** From the city.

**Q.** Those living in the city?

**A.** And also those living in the cantonment; they come too. Because we have got special shows for them. Matinee shows, at noon on Fridays and Sundays.

**Q.** You mean children's shows. But I mean college students, boys between the ages of 16 and 20, do they come much?

**A.** Yes, Sir, they come too.

**Q.** What sort of films do they like?

**A.** They like these serials and dramas. Also Indian pictures.

**Q.** All Indians go in for Indian pictures. And why don't you try to import your own films, I mean from agencies abroad? You have to pay more here. Do you get these foreign films cheap from Madras?

**A.** Their rate is cheaper than others.

**Q.** Are they cheaper than the Indian films?

**A.** Sometimes we pay more for the western films, for high class dramas.

**Q.** But for ordinary western films? Take them for instance in the bulk. Suppose you take 50 Indian films and 50 western films, which would cost you more? Would the Indian films cost you more?

**A.** No, not more. They are equally costly here. The films supplying agencies have got different rates for different stations. Because our place is very small they charge less in comparison to Lahore or Amritsar.

**Q.** So far as the western films are concerned?

**A.** And also Indian films. Supposing we pay Rs. 20 a reel, they get Rs. 40 or Rs. 50 a reel in Lahore or Amritsar, because there they get big audiences.

**Q.** I thought you had to pay more for Indian films than for the ordinary western films?

**A.** No.

*Colonel Crawford:* You talked of your audiences being illiterate. Do you mean to say that they are so illiterate that they cannot read captions?

**A.** The majority cannot read English.

**Q.** Would you be in favour of all western films having vernacular captions added to them?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** That would help your audiences tremendously?

**A.** One of the agents of Tokio Company came here . . . .

*Chairman:* What is that company? Tokio? A Japanese company?

**A.** I do not exactly remember their name. He was also asking about these Urdu titles. I told him that in this part of the country people would like Urdu as well as English titles.

*Colonel Crawford:* From the exhibitors' point of view it would be a good proposition?

**A.** Yes.

*Chairman:* Do you show Japanese pictures at all?

**A.** No. I remember it was the United Artists.

**Q.** Have you shown any Japanese picture here?

**A.** No.

**Q.** Chinese?

**A.** One or two pictures in Chinese dress, but not Chinese pictures.

*Colonel Crawford:* Do your audiences have a particular liking for particular actors and actresses? What particular actor do they like?

**A.** Films of a fighting nature.

**Q.** I am asking of particular persons?

**A.** They like Douglas Fairbanks, Harold Lloyd, Eddie Polo, William Desmond, and among actresses, Ruth Roland and Pearl White.

**Q.** The audiences have a definite preference for them?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Can you tell us of Indian actors and actresses who are popular with the audiences?

**A.** Miss Sulochana and Miss Zobeida. These two actresses are popular here.

**Q.** And any Indian actors who have come out yet?

**A.** They do not know their names. We have not advertised their names.

**Q.** If you advertise that Miss Zobeida is acting in a film, will you get a bigger audience?

**A.** Yes. Because they know that such actors and actresses have worked in such and such a picture, and they had appreciated that picture.

**Q.** That is a very definite attraction?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** You consider that you get your films hired out to you at reasonable prices?

**A.** We think we are getting them at reasonable prices.

**Q.** You think the charges are reasonable? I think somebody was saying that they were not reasonable?

**A.** In our city I think they are reasonable, but if we are going to get them cheaper that is profit to us.

**Q.** You are definitely of opinion that the cinema is getting more popular?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** And that the Indian film is getting more popular?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** How many Indian films do you show?

**A.** We show at least one picture a month.

**Q.** Do you want to show more?

**A.** No, because we have arranged our programme in such a way that we show one serial, one Indian picture, one comedy picture and so on.

**Q.** If the Indian films are a paying proposition would you not like to change your serial films for Indian films?

**A.** We are not getting so many Indian pictures. We can show two or three Indian pictures a month. But we cannot get good pictures.

**Q.** If you could get them would you show Indian pictures in preference to western, every time?

**A.** Two or three pictures we can show.

**Q.** You say that Indian films are very popular?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Are they more popular than western films?

**A.** They are popular, but not more than the western films, because the latter show fighting scenes, sensational adventures and so on.

**Q.** Elsewhere we have been told that the Indian film is a much more paying proposition than the western film?

**A.** The Indian pictures are mostly of Hindu taste and our audiences here at Peshawar are very limited in the case of Hindus. The population is mostly Muhammadan and we cannot get so many pictures of Muhammadan taste here.

**Q.** Have you any criticism to make on the Indian films? Do they satisfy you entirely—those that you get now?

**A.** They have some defects in acting, but they are improving.

**Q.** They have not yet reached the quality you would like to get?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Have you got any difficulties which as an exhibitor you would like to explain to the Committee? What are your troubles? We are here to try and help you?

**A.** We are in association with Madans and whatever we want they supply us and we have no trouble. Sometimes when we get a very good picture from another house we write to Madans that such and such a day should be kept vacant because we are getting the pictures for that day from outside and they raise no objection. Therefore we have no difficulty with them.

**Q.** So far as you are concerned you have no difficulties and you are quite satisfied with the position?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Getting all the films you want?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Good enough stories?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** With the western films you get you are quite satisfied?

**A.** Yes.

**Mr. Coatsman:** I am not quite clear about your agreement with Madans. Is it a written contract in the usual way?

**A.** Not written.

**Q.** You are not bound, you are not tied to them in any way?

**A.** No.

**Q.** What is the seating capacity of your house?

**A.** About 600.

**Q.** Is it usually well filled?

**A.** On the change day it is full. On the next day there is some decrease, and on the third day it decreases still further.

**Q.** What is your average audience?

**A.** If we get a good picture that comes to about 500 a day.

**Q.** Take your audience over a period of, say, three months. What would your average be?

**A.** 300 to 400, daily attendance.

**Q.** On any one of those days how many of these would be people with free passes?

**A.** About 30.

**Q.** What are the prices of your seats?

**A.** Four annas, eight annas and one rupee. Four annas are the most popular.

**Q.** What percentage of your audience on an ordinary day would be in the four-annas seats?

**A.** About half.

**Q.** And how many in the eight-annas seats?

**A.** About one-third.

**Q.** And above comes the one rupee?

**A.** Very few in them.

**Q.** In your experience which is the most popular film you have shown?

**A.** Serials and Indian dramas.

**Q.** Which individual film, in your experience, was the most popular, or perhaps there might be two or three?

**A.** Douglas Fairbanks draws well. "The Thief of Baghdad", "The Black Pirate", Harold Lloyd's "Girl Shy", "Hot Water", Charlie Chaplin's films.

"Turki-Hoor", mythological pictures like "Savitri", "Ram Janam", "Krishna Janma" and so on.

**Q.** Which was the least successful picture?

**A.** Dramas are not appreciated, because the illiterate people cannot follow them.

**Q.** The Chairman asked you about the chances of producing pictures here and you said that you have been thinking about it. Suppose you started a company here to produce pictures, what sort of scale would you start it on? What in your opinion would be the capital you would require?

**A.** Rs. 50,000.

**Q.** What would you do with that?

**A.** We can make scenes, studios, purchase a camera, dresses and all that.

**Q.** And how many plays would you produce in, say, a year?

**A.** I have not thought that out.

**Q.** Have you thought out what markets you would expect for them? Would you expect to send them all over India, or would you send only to this Province and the Punjab?

**A.** They can be appreciated throughout India.

**Q.** Supposing some people in Bannu also started a producing company on the same scale as yours, what effect would it have on your prospects?

**A.** I do not think there will be any effect at all. They will make pictures of their own type, and we will make pictures of our own type. People will appreciate that picture more which is more effective.

**Q.** What type of picture would you aim at producing?

**A.** Fighting pictures.

**Q.** Entertainment pictures?

**A.** Yes, adventures and so on.

**Q.** Do you know how many producing companies there are in India at the present moment?

**A.** As far as I know there are about 20.

**Q.** And where are they?

**A.** Some at Bombay and some in Calcutta.

**Q.** How many are there in America, do you know?

**A.** I cannot say definitely, but we are only dealing with two or three companies. We are getting pictures from the Lahore branch or the Bombay branch.

**Q.** I only wanted to know if you knew exactly how many producing companies there are in America. We had an American expert who told us that there are very few producing companies in America. The point I want to make is this. For that enormous market in America they have very few companies. In India for an immensely smaller market there are many producing companies. Supposing you here and other producers in the other provinces started these small companies, what chances would you have if some really big companies started producing in this country? Would you be able to stand up against them?

**A.** Our pictures can be appreciated in the west. They read our writings and other books.

**Q.** I am not about that. I am talking about production. I want you to concentrate for the moment on your position as a small producer and the position of the small producer similar to you in the Punjab and other places. If one or two big companies with big capital, say, of the scale of five million dollars, started producing high class pictures, what would your position be? Would you still find a market for your pictures?

**A.** There will be a market. If my pictures are good and the plot is good, then mine will have a market.

*Q.* I want you to think about your position as against a big corporation like that. Do you think you could produce pictures as good as they could produce, that will stand up against theirs?

*A.* That is quite different.

*Chairman:* You cannot compete with those big companies. In that view you would expect Government to help the Indian industry?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* So as to prevent such foreign competition?

*A.* Yes.

*Mr. Coatsman:* I am now talking of Indian companies and not of foreign companies. The point I am trying to make is this, that in America the production is in the hands of people with big capital and . . .

*Chairman:* Where is the chance of big companies in India unless they are foreign companies?

*A.* At one time there was one Kohinoor Film Company at Bombay. There were three or four partners in it. They separated and established different studios. Again the partners of these companies separated and so on.

*Chairman:* Unless foreign capital comes in, there is no chance of Indians combining and bringing in 5 millions and 10 millions.

*Mr. Neogy:* I take it your idea is that if the other smaller companies can thrive you can expect to thrive as well?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* And if you were to be kept away by a vague apprehension that somebody at some future time might come with a very big capital, you would make no progress, and this industry also would not make any progress at all?

*A.* No.

*Q.* Do you know Lala Dheru Mal?

*A.* Yes. He was my partner till 1924.

*Q.* I thought he is the proprietor of the Frontier Cinema. Is he still a partner of yours?

*A.* He left in 1924. He does not know the present conditions.

*Q.* He is not connected with any cinema?

*A.* No.

*Q.* Is it correct to say that 75 per cent. of the audiences are Muhammadan and 25 per cent. Hindus?

*A.* Less than that. The Hindus are far less.

*Q.* In your experience when you show a Hindu mythological picture, do the Muhammadans care to attend at all?

*A.* They come on the change day, but after they have seen the thing, that is, one of Hindu taste, the next day very few come.

*Q.* Then you get only a small Hindu audience?

*A.* Yes, as well as a small Muhammadan audience. At that time the Hindus are in larger numbers.

*Q.* This gentleman says, "I am not in favour of prohibition, but special shows for children would be more advantageous." Have you ever arranged special shows for children?

*A.* We have arranged matinee shows for two days in the week. Small children as well as other people also come. We show then the same pictures shown the previous night. But we allow some concessions.

*Q.* Supposing some special certification of films were to be made that might interest children more than grown up people, would such children's performances be popular and profitable from your point of view? Not the usual kind of films which you are at present showing at these matinee performances, but supposing there were other kinds of films not so attractive, but educational?

*A.* Here in Peshawar it would not be successful.



**Q.** You would not have sufficient encouragement?

**A.** They fear to come out of the city. They won't come without the parents or guardians after dusk. Therefore we have shows at 4-30, finishing at 5-30 or 6 p.m., so that they may go home early.

**Q.** I was very interested to hear that you are thinking of making films yourself. You said you had your camera man trained in Calcutta?

**A.** Yes. Not properly.

**Q.** He has got some ideas about it. You have got to train him further?

**A.** We have got some films made by him. He brought them from Calcutta as a sample of his work.

**Q.** If you are going to give him further training where do you think you would send him?

**A.** We think that we can send him to Madans because they have no objection to train him.

**Q.** As you are in association with them?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Have you any writer of stories here?

**A.** They could be got here.

**Q.** What about a director? You propose to train a local man for that purpose?

**A.** Yes. For instance, we people who have got some taste in cinema have also taste for directing.

**Q.** You are not thinking of importing anybody else from outside your province?

**A.** No.

**Q.** What about training actors and actresses?

**A.** These also can be trained.

**Q.** Where do you propose to get your actresses from?

**A.** We have not tried as yet, but we can get actresses in this province.

**Q.** From what class?

**A.** From low classes, not high class.

**Q.** You think you will be able to get good people?

**A.** Yes, I think so.

*Colonel Crawford:* You have spoken of the popularity of Indian films. Would you like to suggest that we would stop all western films altogether?

**A.** Here in Peshawar we cannot do so. If we could make all pictures to Muhammadan taste, we could show them regularly and the people could follow them. Otherwise it would not be a paying job. The majority of the people here are Muhammadans.

**Q.** Unless you have a full programme of pictures of Muhammadan taste, you say you must have western films?

**A.** Yes.

## **Written Statement of Mr. NUR ELAHI, Pleader, Peshawar.**

### **INTRODUCTORY.**

1. No. On the other hand my knowledge of the cinematograph is limited to occasional visits to the cinemas in Peshawar.

### **GENERAL.**

2 (a), (i) 30 per cent.

(ii) 70 per cent. The attendance is increasing fairly well. My answer to this question relates to the Imperial Cinema, outside Kabuli Gate, frequented mostly by the citizens.

(b) The composition of an average cinema audience consists mostly of the citizen, 70 per cent. illiterate, 20 per cent. educated and 10 per cent. children. Ladies very seldom go.

(c) Children under 14, 10 per cent. and adolescents of impressionable age are generally taken to the cinemas by their elders on very rare occasions and those too either go to sleep in the middle of the show or start weeping.

## PART 1.

### *Film industry in India.*

3. With the uneducated class,—comic, cow-boys, serials and war films and adventurous films; and with the literate class society,—sex, one night dramas and war films and comic. As the audience mostly consists of illiterate, the first mentioned films are popular.

4. Exhibitors here in Peshawar generally get films from Lahore and therefore a film reaches Peshawar when it is a century old.

5. No. Indian produced films are not available for exhibition and (a) those available are not mostly of good quality, (b) popular with uneducated class. (c) Less profitable to show the Indian films as compared with the western films—In my opinion the best Indian film I happened to see was "Krishna Janma".

6. (a) No. My reasons are that Indian films first of all are of not good quality, and secondly India has no one nationality and therefore films depicting Hindu mythology and history will be popular with the Hindus while to a Muslim invasions of Mahmud of Ghazni will appeal most. Hence the audience now consisting of Hindus and Musalmans will be divided into two parts, and cinemas will thus be turned into National institutions. (b) Answer to this part is included in (a).

7. No knowledge about it.

8. (a) Production of Indian films is no good as in India acting is a means of earning livelihood and is generally looked down by the public and is not taken as an art, like in the west, and the difficulty is in obtaining lady actresses.

(b) Capital is very shy and training under European supervision would in my opinion help film industry.

9. Exhibitors as far as my knowledge goes have got to pay much for good films and hence they are forced to increase the door. Madan Theatres and Universal are practically monopolizing the supply of films.

10. Block and Blind system existed in Peshawar some time ago and I think this was one of the chief causes of the failure of the Frontier Cinema.

11. Exhibitors here get synopsis of a film on which they send for it.

12. Amusement tax I think does not exist here but the suppliers in Bombay do pay which consequently affects the exhibitors here.

13. Can't answer.

14. Yes.

15. Clear sky, natural scenery, waste grounds, cheap labour and material are favourable conditions in this country for film production on a large scale.

16. No. Because capital is very rare and the art of acting is looked down upon by the public and therefore a sufficient propaganda is required to remove this impression and to make it an art as is in other countries. Supervision and training by the westerners will bring them up to standard.

17. Capital is shy for the present.

19. Cost of production in my opinion will be cheaper than other countries.

### *Films of the British Commonwealth.*

23. (a) To a great extent pictures can unite nations of the British Commonwealth provided each nation is shown in its true colours.

(b) Can't say.

## PART II.

### *Social aspects and control.*

24. (a) Sex films are generally misunderstood by the uneducated public and sometimes it does produce a demoralising effect.

(b) No.

(c) Replied in (a).

(d) Yes.

(e) None has come to my notice.

(f) Once I heard an uneducated Peshawari after he had seen a picture showing Parisian fashions to have taken it for a display of prostitutes in England.

25. Yes. Western sex films when shown to an audience consisting mostly of uneducated public should be strictly censored.

26. Yes.

(b) The "Ten Commandments," the "Queen of Sheba" and the "Thief of Baghdad" offended the religious susceptibilities of a sect of Mussalmans here.

27. Sex films of western civilisation generally produce a bad impression upon the uneducated public and misunderstood by them. Society films should be rarely shown to an audience consisting mostly of uneducated public.

(b) Eastern life is not properly shown in the films produced abroad.

28. Not noticed anything in this connection.

29. Yes.

30. Yes. Sex films produce a bad effect upon them and therefore children below 12 should not be allowed to visit it.

31. Yes.

32. There is no censorship in this province and the films which come here are censored at Bombay.

33. Yes.

34. I have got no special knowledge of it.

35. No special knowledge about it but a provincial board of censor would be advisable and that board should consist of a well-paid officer assisted by the advisory board of non-officials.

36. No. No special knowledge about it.

(b) But I think that board mentioned in question 35 will be advisable.

37. No special knowledge.

38. The "Ten Commandments" was objected to in Lahore.

39—41. No.

42. Can't reply.

43. No.

44. Honest criticism by the public bodies and press will of course be sufficient to maintain good standard of film.

45. No control further than censorship is necessary.

(b) No

### **Oral Evidence of Mr. NUR ELAHI, Pleader, Peshawar, on Thursday, the 1st December 1927.**

*Chairman:* You are a practising pleader, Mr. Nur Elahi?

A. Yes.

*Q.* I think I have met you before?

A. You might have seen me here.

**Q.** How long have you been practising here?

**A.** 5 years.

**Q.** You are a native of Peshawar?

**A.** Oh, yes.

**Q.** Do you go to the cinema?

**A.** I used to go when I was in college but now I seldom go.

**Q.** When did you leave college?

**A.** In 1921.

**Q.** At that time how many cinemas were there in Peshawar?

**A.** We had the Cinema de Paris which used then to go under a different name.

**Q.** That was the only cinema?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Nothing in the city?

**A.** No. Later on they started the Frontier Cinema which afterwards failed and had to be closed.

**Q.** Have you been taking interest at all in any cinema?

**A.** No special interest.

**Q.** I suppose at the time when you were in college the cinema was new to Peshawar?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** You cannot speak much of present day conditions; you don't now go to the cinema. But can you tell us generally what you think of it? Is it very useful?

**A.** For whom, for the educated or the uneducated?

**Q.** Generally, for both.

**A.** I think it is an innocent amusement.

**Q.** Where do you live, in the city or in the cantonment?

**A.** In the city.

**Q.** Although you don't go to the cinema you see people who do.

**A.** I do myself occasionally pay a visit to the cinema.

**Q.** And you see a large number of people going there?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** The illiterate people I suppose go more often than the educated people?

**A.** Yes, specially to the city show.

**Q.** Have you seen any Indian films?

**A.** I have seen many.

**Q.** How long have Indian films been shown in Peshawar?

**A.** They are now becoming popular here, specially with the uneducated class.

**Q.** They like them more than the Western film?

**A.** Yes, because they can follow them more easily.

**Q.** Do you think Government should do anything to encourage the Indian film industry?

**A.** Of course help is required because at the present time we are not getting good Indian films.

**Q.** You think something should be done to help the industry?

**A.** Yes, specially towards training people for acting, because my impression is that the profession here is looked down upon. It is not taken to be an art as in other countries.

**Q.** Is there an Indian theatre here at all?

A. We have got a theatre now.

Q. Do amateurs play there?

A. Not amateurs.

Q. Had you no theatricals in your college?

A. We had many amateur theatricals in college.

Q. You have no amateur performances here such as we have down South and also in Calcutta?

A. No.

Q. But you think people in this province would like to take to acting for the cinema if they are trained?

A. If they are trained and they are given to understand at the start that there is something in it.

Q. Would you advocate a vocational class for that purpose attached to a college or a high school?

A. I cannot say that.

Q. Then how do you encourage acting? You said you specially want to encourage acting; how will you do that?

A. My impression is that special encouragement might be given in the colleges to theatricals.

Q. You see, acting for the cinema is one thing and acting in the theatre another.

A. My impression is that both are closely connected. There is only a slight difference between the two.

Q. Therefore what do you say should be done to encourage people to take to acting? You mean you want an assured profession?

A. Yes.

Q. That would create a larger market for the cinema—is that your idea?

A. Yes.

Q. Take steps to widen the market?

A. Yes.

Q. How do you like the idea of adopting the quota system. Have you read of it in the papers? The quota system which they are adopting in England is to compel every cinema to show a certain amount of British pictures so as to encourage the growth of the home industry. Would you advocate an Indian quota system?

A. Yes.

Q. But how are you going to encourage it? You say the people like Indian films and you want to encourage Indian films. This is one of the methods that has been suggested, namely, to compel every cinema to show a certain amount of Indian pictures. That would create a demand.

A. As far as this part of the country is concerned, it is very backward in this respect.

Q. That may be so, but Bombay may produce, Bengal may produce. You don't mind Bombay or Bengal films so long as they are Indian films?

A. But it is only the frontier film which will appeal most to people here.

Q. Very well then, it will appeal better perhaps. I quite agree with you. But what do you suggest should be done?

A. It should be made a part of education, a course in the schools.

Q. An optional course?

A. Yes, optional.

Q. That is what I was suggesting, having a vocational class. I thought you fought shy of it?

A. No.

Q. You agree then it should be introduced as an optional subject. In the high school or college course?

A. College course.

Q. Then you want somebody trained in that line to be attached to the college in order to train people?

A. Yes.

Q. Why do you want a college course, why not a high school course, say after the third or fourth form?

A. Because in the school boys are under the control of parents.

Q. Surely they wouldn't mind.

A. Parents here on the Frontier will mind it. I can relate an incident in this connection. In the Islamia College class they were performing a drama in the school, so the fathers of the students were invited there. When they saw their sons acting they objected to it. The mentality is quite different here.

Q. But I suppose they will gradually grow out of it just as you are growing out of many other things?

A. It requires time.

Q. Many things have changed, dress and fashions, so these ideas will also change. Probably your parents would not have liked your wearing English costume like this in your younger days?

A. Yes.

Q. Have you put in a written statement.

A. Yes.

Q. Have you any suggestions to make on those lines to any of our questions? If you have any, we shall be glad to hear them.

A. Well, I don't want Indian history and mythology to be filmed.

Q. Why not? Scenes from the Mahabharata for instance?

A. That would appeal to you but not to me.

Q. It might be pleasing to you also?

A. In that case the cinemas will be turned into communal cinemas.

Q. But is there no history without communalism?

A. I don't find any.

Q. Now of course we are all immersed in it, but do you think that in the days of the Mahabharata or in the days of Akbar there was much communalism?

A. No, but to a Mussulman if the poster says a Mahabharata play is going to be shown to-day, I don't think he will go to that film.

Q. Supposing it is a good story, the story of a faithful wife—take, for instance, Savitri's life. I don't know if you have seen it?

A. No.

Q. You know the story?

A. No.

Q. That is one of the defects of our education. We don't get into touch with our own surroundings but we know all about the history of Greece and Rome. You have not heard about Savitri?

A. No.

Q. I am afraid you are taking a very gloomy view of Indian films?

A. No.

Q. I am sorry to see a young man like you do that.

A. It may be only a difference of opinion.

**Q.** You don't think there is anything for instance in the life of the various rulers here, not immediately preceding, but say, about 200 or 300 years ago, ancient history,—do you think such things will not be instructive? I suppose you read about them; you will not ban students from reading about them?

**A.** No. There is a difference between the educated and the uneducated.

**Q.** Will you prohibit the uneducated classes from seeing such scenes?

**A.** An educated person won't mind it, but so far as the uneducated people are concerned they will not go.

**Q.** You see, for instance, we saw a film the other day, "Leila Majnoon." That is a well known story?

**A.** I know it.

**Q.** What about a film like that, a film depicting that story?

**A.** That may appeal to the people.

**Mr. Neogy:** We had an opera on that subject in Bengal and it was very popular.

**A.** I cannot say, but as far as love stories are concerned the Frontier people will not like them; they prefer adventure stories.

**Chairman:** It is not a love affair in the sense of there being any passionate scenes. Anyway, you would rigorously exclude mythology, whether it be Muhammadan mythology, Hindu mythology or Christian mythology.

**A.** My impression is that it will lead to communal cinemas.

**Q.** Nobody is forced to go to the cinema. Those who like it, will go. But what is the objection? If a man sees a story he does not like is going to be shown, he can keep away. But supposing you show a good Mussalman story—in Peshawar about 80 or 90 per cent. are Mussalmans—why should they not enjoy it? And the Hindus if they don't like it, let them keep aloof.

**A.** In that case you will be dividing the present audience into two parts.

**Q.** Only those who like may go. I have no preference for instance. I want to see a good film, whether it be a good Muhammadan or a good Hindu story. There may be many like me. Those who like it can go.

**A.** We have to take the case of the average Pathan up here. If he knows a Hindu film is going to be shown he won't go.

**Q.** There are Hindu films shown here from time to time and we have not heard of any trouble. I put the question specifically to the head of the C. I. D. and he told me there had been no trouble on account of Hindu-Muhammadan films.

**A.** No, there has been no trouble.

**Q.** Then what is your fear due to? For the last 5 or 6 years things are going on; Hindu-Muhammadan films are being shown and nobody has heard of any trouble.

**A.** But my impression is that to Hindu films more Hindus will generally go.

**Q.** It may be more Hindus will go. Certainly you are right there. But what is the harm?

**A.** No harm; but if a Western film were shown in that case the audience consists of two sister communities.

**Q.** Where is the sisterhood? When you hold the view that one should be shown and not the other, I don't see any sisterhood at all.

**A.** I want both Western films and Indian films provided they do not show any history or mythology.

**Mr. Neogy:** The Arabian nights perhaps. Perhaps that might be popular both with Hindus and Muhammadans?

**A.** Yes.

*Chairman:* I am afraid you are taking too pessimistic a view. I hope a young man like you will educate the people out of any such thinking. Then that is one thing you wanted to say, what else do you want to say?

*A.* Nothing else in particular.

*Colonel Crawford:* You said you don't go to the cinema. Why? You used to go as a student and you don't go now.

*A.* In those days I never used to miss any cinema but now I go occasionally being busy otherwise.

*Q.* Is it due to being busy otherwise or do the films shown make no appeal to you?

*A.* Yes, the pictures shown near the Cabuli Gate in the Imperial Cinema are not good; so I have to go to the Cinema de Paris which is in the cantonment and means a lot of trouble getting there.

*Q.* You live near the Cabuli Gate?

*A.* I live inside the city, so when I do hear of a good cinema I do go there.

*Q.* Your general complaint against exhibitors is that they are not giving you good stuff. You say it is an innocent entertainment. Do you think we should do anything about the captions being written in the vernacular—would that assist the audience.

*A.* It would.

*Q.* Have you any particular complaint to make about Indian films beyond what you said to the Chairman?

*A.* The acting is no good and the scenes are generally no good.

*Q.* You think the stories are not good.

*A.* I cannot say about the stories, but I mean the make-up and the technique is no good.

*Q.* I was interested in what you said to the Chairman but don't you think that we have got to provide entertainment to suit the tastes of all persons?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Well is there any harm in showing a Hindu mythological film, we will say, for this week, and a Muhammadan one for the latter half of the week?

*A.* In that case you see my impression is that you will be dividing the present audience into two parts?

*Q.* On the occasions when you show these particular films?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Well what about the European audience? Are you going to have anything for them particularly?

*A.* My answers generally relate to the cinemas outside the Cabuli Gate. As far as Europeans are concerned I think they are having good stuff.

*Q.* Are the films shown to them of general interest to Indians as well?

*A.* To the educated classes.

*Q.* Educated classes only? Then can you divide your cinemas into two—educated for one class and uneducated for another.

*A.* The cinemas outside the Cabuli Gate are generally frequented by the uneducated and most of the educated go to the Cinema de Paris.

*Q.* What you are really saying is that the exhibitor in his own interest has got to give the audience the type of story which they will like and you particularly stand for stories of adventure, I presume, and comic films?

*A.* Yes, adventure and comic films.

*Q.* Comic and adventure films are the types of films which in your opinion draw audiences and if the exhibitor wants to make money those are the types he should supply?



A. Yes.

Q. Have you been to the West, to England?

A. No.

Q. What do you think of the Western films? Is that your impression of what life is like in America?

A. Yes.

Mr. Green: I just want to carry on a little further this question of different classes of audiences and the danger of dividing them. I take it first of all one can divide audiences by religion, by race, by province, by education, by age—that is five distinct classes, and if you take all the permutations and combinations of that it will give you 50 or more different kinds of audience. You take the Muhammadan, he may be from the North-West Frontier, he may be from Bombay or Madras; as you probably know he is different.

Chairman: In Madras he does not know a word of Hindustani.

Mr. Green: The Madras Muhammadan often knows no Hindustani except the word "Hai"? He may be literate or illiterate; he may be semi-educated; he may be a baby in arms or he may be 10 years of age, or 20 or 80. So in any audience you get various classes. Col. Crawford has already suggested that by bi-weekly change of films you may please two main sections, the Hindus and the Muhammadans. What is your objection? You say it will divide the audience. Do you mean the cinema owner won't get as big an audience and will lose money, or that it will perpetuate the differences between two sections of the community?

A. My answer is to start with from the point of view of the cinema exhibitor but it is mainly from the point of view of an Indian.

Q. From the social and national point of view?

A. Yes, from a social and national point of view.

Q. But if differences exist, is the cinema going to aggravate those differences?

A. Yes, that is my impression; the difference may be made greater.

Q. Let us get that quite clear. I, although not an Indian, am extremely interested in seeing an Indian film and unless they very grossly caricature my own people I would see them with greater interest even than films of my own people because it is something that I don't know as well. You have no objection to Indians seeing representations of Western civilisation and Western life? I beg your pardon, you said you had no objection to educated Indians seeing them. Do you object to uneducated Indians also seeing them?

A. Yes.

Q. Why? Because it is bad for their morals?

A. No; the morality is there.

Q. Then what is your objection to their seeing it?

A. My objection is that the present audience will be divided into two parts.

Q. I am talking about an illiterate audience seeing a Western film?

A. They cannot follow it properly.

Q. But why do you object to their seeing it if they are willing to pay their 4 annas for seeing a film they cannot follow?

A. They cannot take Western life in its proper light.

Q. You mean they misunderstand it?

A. Yes.

Q. But what harm does it do them?

A. No harm to them.

Q. Then whom does it do harm to?

A. In my opinion it is harmful to the nationality whose life is shown there.

Q. I see, but if that nationality does not object, then I think you won't object?

A. Then it is all right.

Q. Do you think it is quite impossible to get Indian films of universal appeal? The Arabian Nights has been suggested. In fact we have seen a film on Aladdin and his Wonderful Lamp before a large Muhammadan audience which seemed very popular.

A. My answer on this question related specially to history and mythology. As far as stories which are common to both communities are concerned, they are not objectionable.

Q. Well let me take the case of a purely Hindu subject, the Mahabharata. I take it it is possible to get many tales from that.

Chairman: I suppose you have read the Mahabharat?

Mr. Green: Supposing it is possible to get one which would not offend Muhammadans, would they not be prepared to see it?

A. At the present moment the tension between the two communities is so great that an uneducated person would decline to see a picture if he knows it is going to be a Hindu story.

Q. As the Chairman pointed out, if he does not go to the cinema, it won't hurt either?

A. No.

Q. You agreed with the Chairman that it would be a good thing to have classes for acting as part of the college course? In this province who would join those classes? Would you yourself join such a class?

A. Of course, in my college days I did take part in a Shakespearean drama.

Q. That was probably for the sake of your education?

A. It was a course in my college days.

Q. But would you have been prepared to join a class with the definite idea of becoming a professional actor? Do you think many people in this province would join such a class if one is opened?

A. I don't think so.

Q. Of course, I need not ask you whether any ladies would join?

A. Oh, no.

Mr. Neogy: I think you said that the audience here generally like films in which there is a lot of excitement and stories of adventure. But is there not enough excitement already among the people in this province? Is it always safe to show them pictures of excitement which you say would appeal to the people most?

A. Yes, certainly they would like such pictures.

Q. But should we add to the excitement that already exists here in the people?

A. Where is the harm?

Q. Take a film in which men and women are tortured. We saw one such film only yesterday. It might be quite harmless if it were shown elsewhere,—but having regard to the natural aptitude of the men of this province, do you think such films can be safely shown or ought to be shown here, I mean films depicting abduction and torture of men and women?

A. I think they can be shown here, because the consequence is generally good, because the girl abducted is rescued, and in that way it will help people here.

Chairman: You don't mind their learning new methods of torture?

Mr. Green: Perhaps they know them already!

*Mr. Neogy:* Can you imagine any subject of local interest in this province which might form the subject of a good film and which would be unobjectionable from your point of view?

*A.* I cannot think of any at the moment.

*Q.* Do you think if a film were to depict Alexander's invasion,—and this particular province, I believe, has got many associations connected with that event,—that would be objectionable from your point of view or from anybody's point of view?

*A.* Hindus will object to that, because the Hindu Rajas fought the battle with Alexander on the frontier.

*Mr. Green:* In England we should not object to a representation of the Norman conquest in 1066?

*A.* There the people are educated.

*Chairman:* Here they are brought up in a communal school.

*Mr. Neogy:* Don't you think the films depicting stories from the Mahabharata depicting certain virtues, chastity, obedience and so on, not necessarily having anything to do with any religious dogma, would appeal to the Muhammadans here?

*A.* They will. Simply because those stories are taken from the Mahabharat will not necessarily make them unpopular.

*Q.* I am very glad to hear that. So you think the subjects that would be objected to would be those which would have some connection with religious teaching, and as for the rest they won't be objected to?

*A.* I am afraid I shall have to repeat my remarks.

*Chairman:* When I was telling you about Savitri, it was about the devotion of a wife to her husband.

*A.* It may appeal to Muhammadans.

*Mr. Neogy:* Therefore it depends upon the particular story, is it not? You cannot all at once say that no story which would appeal to a Hindu would appeal to a Muhammadan?

*A.* No.

*Chairman:* May I know if you have ever read in a school where there were Hindu boys also or have you always read in a communal school?

*A.* I read in the Government school where there were Hindu, Sikh and Mussulman boys as well.

*Q.* I suppose they got on well together?

*A.* We used to get on well, but I cannot say anything about the present state.

*Q.* In your time all boys were getting on well as boys. Did you ever think that this was a Mussulman boy and the other was a Hindu boy and so on? That idea never entered your head?

*A.* No.

*Q.* Therefore such schools are now in existence?

*A.* Yes.

### **Oral Evidence of Sardar KIRPAL SINGH, Honorary Munsiff, Peshawar, on Thursday, the 1st December 1927.**

*Chairman:* You are an Honorary Munsiff in Peshawar?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* What does it mean? Do you have any civil jurisdiction?

*A.* It means a Civil Judge, an Honorary Civil Judge.

*Q.* Up to what amount can you dispose of suits?

*A.* Up to Rs. 1,000.

**Q.** How many Honorary Munsiffs are there in Peshawar?

**A.** I am the only one.

**Q.** Was there an Honorary Munsiff before you?

**A.** Yes, one man is always appointed as Honorary Munsiff in addition to the paid man.

**Q.** You are attached to his court, I suppose. Is there a District Munsiff also here?

**A.** We have got three munsiffs here, one is the Senior Munsiff, the second is Additional Munsiff and the third is an Honorary Munsiff, and I have got pecuniary jurisdiction to the extent of Rs. 1,000. I can try suits relating to property and so on.

**Q.** How long have you been a Munsiff?

**A.** Since 1921.

**Q.** I suppose you are a graduate?

**A.** I am only an undergraduate.

**Q.** Are you a native of Peshawar?

**A.** Yes, I am also a Municipal Commissioner.

**Q.** Do you go to the cinema much?

**A.** I go often.

**Q.** Do you go to the city cinema or to the cantonment cinema?

**A.** I go to both cinemas.

**Q.** You like the cinemas, I suppose. What sort of films appeal to you most?

**A.** Historical films and dramas. I don't like the big fighting scenes or the serials.

**Q.** When you say dramas, what sort of dramas do you like?

**A.** Any good dramas which would finish in a day.

**Q.** Do you see many films where passionate love scenes are shown?

**A.** I have not seen any.

**Q.** Are there many such shown here?

**A.** No, very seldom such films are shown here.

**Q.** Do the mass of the people, whether Hindu or Muhammadan, like such things?

**A.** Yes, the educated classes like such things.

**Q.** I am asking you about the uneducated classes?

**A.** They like serials, because they cannot grasp the plot in one day, but by seeing the picture once it produces some effect on them and they talk about it outside and then again they come and see the same play once or twice.

**Q.** Do the uneducated classes like daring feats and things of that sort?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Do you think the Indian films are becoming popular?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Have you seen many Indian films?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Depicting both Hindu life and Musulman life?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** I suppose they are fairly popular with the people of Peshawar?

**A.** Generally when such films are shown, the cinema theatres are crowded.

**Q.** Do you yourself go to such shows?

**A.** Yes.

Q. I suppose you are not satisfied with the technique of the Indian films?

A. There are not good actors in the Indian films, and the photography also is not good.

Q. But all the same, people like Indian films?

A. Of course, they do. But Indians have taken up the film producing industry only quite recently, and considering the fact that it is only about 6 or 7 years since this industry has been taken up by Indians, the standard they have attained so far is very good.

Q. I suppose the Indian pictures you see here are mostly from Bombay?

A. Yes, they are from the Madan, Kohinoor and Krishna Companies.

Q. Have you seen any social dramas in the Indian films?

A. Yes.

Q. Apart from mythological or historical??

A. Yes.

Q. For instance, the one called "The Telephone Girl"?

A. I have seen "The Telephone Girl". I have also seen the film about the man who sold his daughter to a saith. They are both good films.

Q. Is it liked here?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you think the mode of dress copied in the Bombay films or in the Madan films makes any difference in the popularity of the films here?

A. The difference in dress does not count much here.

Q. Do you think some effort should be made to encourage the Indian film industry?

A. Yes.

Q. Would you advocate a quota system compelling every cinema to show some percentage of Indian films?

A. I would.

Q. I don't mean every Indian film, but approved films?

A. Yes.

Q. The percentage to grow larger and larger as the industry improves?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you think there is any chance for the film industry to thrive here in this province? Do you think people will produce films in this province?

A. Not for the present at any rate.

Q. Till they know it is a paying proposition in other provinces, they will not, but once they know that it is a paying thing they will take it up?

A. Yes.

Q. Are you satisfied with the class of pictures shown here? Have they any demoralising effect on the people?

A. No, but the films that come here are not of a good class, because there is no competition in the city. There is only one cinema in the city and they don't show good pictures. Therefore the people have to be satisfied with anything that they get.

Q. You think there must be more cinemas?

A. Yes.

Q. Are you satisfied with the general tone of the films that you get here? I mean are you satisfied with the censorship?

A. Yes.

Q. You don't think any evil effect is produced by the cinema in your province?

A. There is one kind of film which produces a bad effect, I mean films dealing with crime, showing how thefts are committed and so on. Generally the population of this place has got much excitement already, and so the exhibition of films depicting thefts and crime are likely to have a harmful effect.

Q. We have been told by the Chief of the C. I. D. here that he does not think that the films have any demoralising effect in that direction?

A. That is my own idea.

Q. You think it may have a demoralising effect, but you don't speak from any actual experience?

A. I heard that some of the thefts which are committed are directly due to the influence of the cinema, like going up the pipes and so on.

Q. Otherwise you are satisfied with the films shown here?

A. Yes.

Q. Have you been to the west?

A. No.

Q. Are you satisfied with the sort of story which is depicted in Indian films, I mean the social dramas and so on? Do you think they appeal to the people?

A. Those films which I have seen were quite good. The only defect is that their technique is not quite good.

Q. Now, is there anything particular that you want to say? I suppose you have seen our questionnaire?

A. I have nothing more to say.

Q. You think the cinema is growing more and more popular with the people and you think it is an amusement which ought to be encouraged?

A. Yes.

Q. What about educational films? Should they be shown in schools and colleges, also films dealing with Agriculture, Public Health and so on?

A. I would like that sort of thing to be introduced. It is necessary to educate the people of this province by means of the cinema. Students in schools and colleges would certainly like to see such films.

Q. Therefore, you think that some effort should be made by Government to produce such films?

A. Yes.

Mr. Neogy : Have you seen Hindu mythological films here?

A. Yes.

Q. On those occasions did you find any considerable Muhammadan audience?

A. I generally find a Muhammadan audience there.

Q. What will be their proportion, roughly, when a Hindu mythological film is shown?

A. I think about 70 per cent. Muhammadans and 30 per cent. Hindus. There is no falling off of the Muhammadan audience when a Hindu mythological film is shown.

Q. Have you ever heard any complaint about such films? Have you ever heard the Muhammadan audience say that they should not see a Hindu film?

A. Of course, some uneducated people outside the theatre always say that they should not see a Hindu film.

Q. Do they themselves go to the cinema?

A. I don't think so.

Q. Those who try to dissuade the others from going don't go to the cinema themselves?

A. They don't go themselves.

**Oral Evidence of Mr. NOOR HUSAIN AZRI, Head Master, Government High School, Mardan, on Thursday, the 1st December 1927.**

*Chairman :* You are the Head Master of the Government High School, Mardan?

A. Yes.

Q. That is what you call Hoti Mardan?

A. Yes.

Q. Have you seen our questionnaire?

A. Yes, but I have not been able to answer all your questions.

Q. I suppose you have no cinemas in Mardan?

A. No, none. We have one at Nowshera Cantonment, which is about 15 miles from Mardan.

Q. I suppose it is more or less inaccessible to the people of Mardan?

A. Yes.

Q. Have long have you been in Mardan?

A. For about one year. Before that I was at Kohat. Even in Kohat there is no cinema. Before going to Kohat I was in Peshawar.

Q. When was that?

A. That was in 1922.

Q. For how many years were you here?

A. For 3 years.

Q. Have you travelled to Europe or America?

A. No.

Q. Where do you see cinema shows? I suppose you saw them in Peshawar and Lahore?

A. Yes, I was educated in Lahore.

Q. When did you leave school?

A. I left college in 1909, that is before the cinema days. But I pay occasional visits to Lahore as I belong to the Punjab.

Q. I suppose you believe in the film as a good instrument of education generally?

A. It is, to a certain extent.

Q. Won't you use the film in your school?

A. But the benefits to be derived from the films can as well be derived from the magic lantern slides, and they would serve the same purpose.

Q. Have you seen any catalogue of educational films produced in America or Germany?

A. No.

Q. Have you seen the films which Patel & Co. supply?

A. No, I have not heard of them.

Q. So you are not in touch with educational films?

A. No, I am afraid not.

Q. Nor do you read any magazines dealing with films as a means of education?

A. As a matter of fact, sufficient attention has not been drawn to this industry so far.

Q. I suppose you are not aware that Germany and America produce any amount of educational films?

A. I am not aware of it.

Q. I thought when you said that magic lantern slides would serve the same purpose as the cinema films, you had some knowledge of the educational films?

A. I meant to say that the cinema film arrangement is more elaborate and expensive than the magic lantern slides, and that both would serve the same purpose.

Q. Anyway, you have not seen any educational films or films dealing with public health and so on?

A. No. But I have seen the ordinary films that are shown in big towns like Peshawar and Lahore.

Q. I suppose your students have no chance of seeing any cinema?

A. No, none. But sometimes travelling cinemas visit our place, and they give shows once a week. They stop there for a day or two and give shows, because Mardan is not a big place.

Q. You said you see the cinemas occasionally when you come to Peshawar or Lahore once or twice a year?

A. Yes.

Q. So you have hardly bestowed any thought upon the potentiality of the film either as an educational factor or as a means of spreading knowledge, as you say that public attention has not been drawn to this industry sufficiently?

A. Since the receipt of your questionnaire I have thought over this question.

Q. Do you think that educational films should be produced here?

A. Of course, if they are of educative value, they will be useful, but they will not be of any use if we get films of the type that are now shown in big cities like Lahore.

Q. You don't want them to be shown in schools or colleges?

A. No.

Q. What is your objection to the type of film that is shown?

A. Excuse me, Sir, they are a bit vulgar. They don't conform to the standard of morality which, especially, educational people would like to see in their pupils. There are too many vulgar scenes.

Q. What do you mean by vulgar scenes?

A. Thrilling and sensational scenes; exaggerated scenes.

Q. You don't like daring scenes to be shown?

A. They are exaggerated scenes. A man falling from five storeys and not breaking his bones. They are unrealistic.

Q. You mean they should not be shown to children?

A. To children, and even to adults.

Q. Adults also?

A. By adults I mean college students.

Q. They should not see motor car tricks?

A. That they can see in the circus.

Q. But you very seldom get the circus here.

A. Peshawar people have got many chances of seeing the circus, not the Mardan people.

Q. Do you go to any theatres?

A. No, Sir.

Col. Crawford: So a travelling cinema goes every week to Mardan?

A. No, once a year, very rarely.

Mr. Green: Do you use the magic lantern at all in your school?

A. Yes, Sir.

Q. And that is popular?

A. Very popular. The boys like it very much.

Q. What kind of subjects?

A. Geographical subjects—the habits and customs of other nations.



*Q.* If the cinema could be made no more expensive wouldn't your boys, instead of seeing magic lantern slides showing other countries, like to see the representation of some moving pictures?

*A.* Of course that would be very nice.

*Q.* Your objection is to the expense in the first instance and you are not sure you can get suitable films.

*A.* At present they are not suitable. If suitable films are available they would be very instructive.

*Q.* You would welcome presumably a supply guaranteed by Government and the educational authorities as being suitable—if it was approved by your own department?

*A.* That would be very nice, Sir.

*Mr. Neogy:* When did any travelling cinema visit Mardan last?

*A.* It was in September last.

*Q.* And you had a few shows there?

*A.* Yes, Sir. They allowed concessions to the boys and the school allowed boys to go there.

*Q.* So it was very popular with the boys?

*A.* So far as the selling of the tickets in the school went, it was not very popular. But the boys got their tickets from the booking office of the show?

*Q.* How?

*A.* The Proprietor distributed a certain number of tickets in the school. But that sale was not very considerable. Then later the boys went of themselves.

*Q.* So the students went in considerable numbers?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* What kind of pictures were shown?

*A.* The usual kinds you find in Peshawar.

*Q.* Are Indian pictures at all shown in travelling cinemas?

*A.* No, Sir, they are all western films.

*Q.* And they appeal to the audience there?

*A.* Of course they enjoy the movements and the action. They see these things so seldom that they go to it out of curiosity.

*Q.* Have you yourself seen an Indian picture?

*A.* No, Sir.

**Oral Evidence of Mr. J. H. TOWLE, M.A., I.E.S., Director of Public Instruction, North-West Frontier Province, on Thursday, the 1st December 1927.**

*Chairman:* You are the Director of Public Instruction of the Frontier Province?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* How long has this province had a separate Director of Public Instruction?

*A.* Since about 1911.

*Q.* And how long have you been in the Province?

*A.* I have been here since 1922.

*Q.* Were you in the Punjab before?

*A.* I was nearly 3 years in the Punjab and 16½ years at Aligarh.

*Q.* I suppose you believe in the cinema as a useful method of instruction generally?

*A.* Well, I may say at once that I have not been to a cinema performance ten times in the whole of my life. But looking at it from the point of

view of an educational machine, I should say that I should agree at once with the view which was expressed by the Imperial Educational Conference this year that the value of the cinema as a machine for education is extremely limited.

Q. You mean for education in schools?

A. Yes.

Q. But as a means of popular education?

A. Oh that is another thing. As a means of spreading general knowledge amongst the general public, its potentialities are distinctly greater, I should say.

Q. Take, for instance, natural history, biology, zoology and such like subjects, you think the cinema as such . . .

A. I do not say it would be of no use, but its importance should not be exaggerated at all.

Q. Have you seen any of the educational films produced in Germany or America?

A. No.

Q. I suppose you are not in charge of any mass education movement in this province?

A. We have not been able to undertake it.

Q. Visual instruction?

A. We are too busy at present trying to educate children.

Q. I suppose your province would welcome any films produced in that direction?

A. Yes, subject to a fairly rigorous censorship that the films do conform to Indian ideas and to the general requirements of decency, I should say that for mass education of the public popular lectures and popular demonstrations would be a good thing. And I would make use of two things if I had my own way. I would have, if it was possible, not only a cinema, but a broadcasting apparatus.

Q. So that experts may give lessons as it were?

A. They might work in correlation. The scheme that appeals to me in particular is the one that has been introduced as an experimental measure by the last Political Agent in the Kurram valley. It has nothing to do with the cinema but it contains the same sort of idea. He has set up a receiving apparatus and has turned a room of the local school into a sort of general public club room which is lit up in the evening. People come in and hear Indian news broadcasted, and he was hoping that he would be able to get such news broadcasted as would be of interest and intelligible to the people in his part of the world.

Q. Who broadcasts them?

A. That I do not know. I gather it is Bombay, because he said that the Gujarati programme would not be of much use on the frontier.

Mr. Coatsman: I have seen Urdu programmes.

Mr. Green: The language difficulty is a big one with the broadcaster at present. But they have got a scheme in contemplation by which they will have transmission by long and short waves, long waves being for their own locality and the short waves for distant stations, in which case, of course, they might be more suitable for your purpose.

A. Yes. The idea is being tried out, or was being tried out by him, i.e., the Political Agent, Kurram and it seems to me to be capable of a good deal of expansion. For instance, if you had it in the tahsil headquarters, a large concourse of people sometimes would come in and a knowledge of the outside world would spread over the particular tahsil. It would be of great use if tahsil headquarters could be made the place, if there be enough money, where programmes could be broadcasted. In addition to these broadcasting programmes you could have selected cinema demonstrations.

*Chairman:* What about travelling cinemas?

*A.* Travelling cinemas ought to do very well.

*Mr. Neogy:* At Government expense or would people have to pay?

*A.* In this part of the world it would be at Government expense. They will have to be of an educational or practical character, for instance, on sugar cane, wheat growing, and on cotton as even a little cotton is grown in this part of the world,—and particularly on fruit packing. Then there are the co-operative credit societies. There is a system of cinema demonstrations already existing in the Punjab which is connected with the Co-operative Credit Societies. This might very well come into this province.

*Chairman:* So far as schools and colleges are concerned, demonstrations of a purely educational kind could be made?

*A.* I think so. I do not know whether Mr. Noor Hussain gave you the findings of the Imperial Educational Conference.

*Q.* I do not think we heard it.

*A.* If I may, I can give you some information about it. This is the official report of our provincial delegate to the Imperial Educational Conference, to which we sent a delegate. It reads thus: "Arrangements were made for delegates to see an exhibition of British educational films at the Blackfriars Theatre and to visit the studios of "British Instructional Films" at Surbiton on the 4th July. Mr. H. R. Murray, Divisional Inspector, Board of Education, addressed the Conference on the uses to which the cinema can be put. He said that the claims made for it were excessive. The film, like the wireless service, is a mass method and its use is outside the main stream of educational movement. Ordinary pictures or lantern slides can do more simply many of the things which it is claimed should be done by the film. He thought the film might be used to convey information and for the purpose of revision, but it could never train the people in the art of thinking. Films for mass audiences of school children intended to stimulate and broaden the child's mind were more likely to succeed than the class room film. His view was confirmed by Mr. Tate. It was generally agreed that the possibilities of the cinema in schools were severely limited. At the conclusion of the session on this subject a special meeting was held and the following resolution was carried unanimously:

'That this Conference, recognising the far-reaching educational influence of the cinema both inside and outside the school, on the one hand earnestly hopes that the competent authorities will take every possible step to prevent the display of demoralising films, and on the other desires to emphasise the importance of the production and use of wholesome and suitable films which will convey an accurate impression of the life and condition of all parts of the Empire.' That is their resolution. Then there is something that the Hygiene people had to say. They say,—this is not exclusively their report, but their representatives to the Imperial Conference they say. (Reads).

*Q.* Is this Mrs. Rolfe's?

*A.* Yes. This is a letter addressed by her to the members of the Educational Conference.

*Q.* We have heard enough of that. As regards the production of instructional films of that sort, in pursuance of the suggestion contained there, do you think some effort ought to be made to produce such films in this country?

*A.* Subject to climatic and financial possibilities an effort should be made by all means.

*Q.* That will be helpful both for educational institutions and for the visual instruction of the masses?

*A.* I should say that the two classes of films ought to be kept rather severely separate, those for entertainment and spread of knowledge among the general public and those for use in schools and colleges.

*Q.* That is to say, in the case of those for schools and colleges for general instruction you would advocate Government producing them themselves?

A. Either the Government or a thoroughly strong firm of educational film producing people who really know all about the technique and the particular kind of film which can be used in the class room.—I do not mean the kind of film which can be used from the moral point of view, but from the technical point of view.

Q. As regards amusement films, that is more a matter of policy as to how far Government should intervene in the encouragement and growth of such films in the country. We want your assistance more on the educational side. You think the use of the film for the class room is likely to be exaggerated?

A. That seems to be the consensus of opinion, but personally, as I say, my knowledge of the cinema is so extremely limited that that opinion must be taken as secondhand.

Q. From your experience do you think the cinema has any bad effects on the student population?

A. That is very difficult to say. I should say the showing of films which are of an objectionable character—it need not go as far as being indecent—is bound to have a bad effect on them.

Q. In the sense of demoralising them?

A. Yes.

Q. Of course, that would be so in the case of persons of impressionable age, whether in the east or the west?

A. Yes.

Q. I suppose you are not in a position to give an opinion as to whether censorship is adequate or not.

A. I am afraid I am not. The inference one can draw from occasional references in the newspapers is to the effect that people have passed in Bombay something which, say, the Chief Commissioner of Delhi or the Governor of the Punjab thinks unsuitable.

Q. I think it is a wholesome rule with practical politicians not to take an exaggerated view of what appears in the papers. For instance, we were told very solemnly in the "Times" of London that the kidnapping of Miss Ellis was due to the cinema. But the police have never heard of any such thing at all. So that press people may imagine many things which practical people know . . .

A. I have never heard of such a suggestion.

Q. Nor did any of us hear it, but the London Times gravely published that that was due to the cinema. I suppose you are not connected with the Industries Department?

A. No.

Q. Have you got any vocational classes in your schools?

A. We made a proposal to the Government of India that we should be allowed to open a technical school. That was referred to the Industries Department, and at present we have got as far as the sanction of a grant for making an industrial survey of the province. We have approached the Punjab Government for help in finding us an officer who is competent to carry out the survey, and on his report some sort of action will be taken. No one can say yet what it is going to be. But so far as vocational classes attached to schools are concerned, there is one aided school at Nowshera, 26 miles away, which has an orphanage attached to it, and the school itself is largely composed of orphans. There they have a graduated course in tailoring and in carpentry, and the boys take one or the other. In another elementary sort of way, some of the boy scout troops in the province are taught local handicrafts, with the object simply to increase the general usefulness of the scouts.

Q. The reason why I asked you this question was this. It has been suggested that you might add a vocational class in one or other of the Govern-

ment educational institutions to give training to boys in acting, photography and such like things, with regard to the film industry?

A. I would be inclined to say that it would be much better if you would substitute the word, "college" for "school". That would be quite a sound idea if you could secure adequate arrangements with some science department in a college. A far higher scientific knowledge is required than is attainable in a school, and it would be a waste of time and money to teach boys of the matriculation class.

Q. You are aware that this province furnishes ample material for filming. You have fine scenery here, and also the type of people you have here are suited for the purpose. From that point of view, may I ask your opinion on the suggestion of adding a class of that sort in the collegiate institutions?

A. In this province we have only one college which teaches science, and that is the Islamia College. It is an aided college. If, for instance, a considered proposal were made and adequate financial aid were given, it might be possible to start such a class. I would not like to prophesy very much as to its chances of success.

Mr. Green: You are referring to training men in acting?

A. No. What I was thinking of was the scientific side of the film industry and photography for the purpose. That really would be a class for a B.Sc., to attend if he wanted to take up the making of films as a business in his after life.

Chairman: I suppose your province is not in a financial position to carry on the experiment itself without aid from Government?

A. No. In any case Government would have to give their sanction. The position at present is, we have a fairly substantial 5-year programme and we are working on that. And it is an understood thing that except in cases of real urgency we stick to that programme till the end of 1931.

Q. A fairly liberal grant you have had for education?

A. Yes, but there is a great deal of leeway to be made up.

Colonel Crawford: You are concentrating mainly on the education of children in what you say?

A. Yes.

Q. In view of your difficulty in getting adequate finance to carry on your work, has it struck you that you could give a good deal of general education very cheaply through the film?

A. General education to children?

Q. Not exactly very young children, but people . . .

A. I do not say that the cinema is useless in schools, but it has very severe limitations in the class room.

Q. Looking at it from the point of view of the general endeavour to raise the general standard of education in the province among all classes, would you say that the cinema may provide a cheap method?

A. Yes, I would, but on some such lines as those I have suggested before, namely, that at reasonable centres, such as tahsil headquarters, there should be a subsidised arrangement for the display of suitable films. By suitable films I do not mean that they need always be technical. For instance, a sort of news gazette would very possibly be of the highest value.

Q. I presume even healthy entertainment films, showing different types of life, higher standards of life.

A. It would be of great use. Films can be very easily worked on malaria, cholera and things of that sort, showing how these sicknesses come about for lack of certain precautions.

Q. Are you sufficiently enthusiastic about it definitely to say that it is worth while our making some such recommendation?

A. You mean for this province in particular, or generally?

Q. Generally.

A. I think it would be a sound idea. As a matter of fact, I have been out in the Punjab for quite a long time, but I gather that this is part of the machinery which the Rural Community Board in the Punjab is using, and it is a thing which is, I think, capable of tremendous expansion.

Mr. Coatsman: I just want to get the place of the film in education a little more clear in my mind. It seems to me that the film could only be an adjunct to the other instruments of education. For example, would you agree that the real aim of education is to develop the power of thinking?

A. Yes. It trains children to think and act as reasonable human beings.

Q. And the film can hardly teach you how to think, it can only convey information?

A. Yes, in what I should think, a pleasant form.

Q. But the real instruments of education are the educational methods which you are now pursuing in schools, and the film cannot possibly take their place?

A. Yes.

Q. It can only be an adjunct to that?

A. I would class the film as an extremely useful subsidiary to it.

**\*Oral Evidence of Mr. M. ZIAUDDIN, Bar-at-Law, Additional Public Prosecutor, Peshawar, on Thursday, the 1st December 1927.**

Chairman: You are the Public Prosecutor?

A. The Additional Public Prosecutor.

Q. Barrister-at-law?

A. Yes.

Q. How many years did you stay in England?

A. I stayed 3 years.

Q. How many years have you been here at the Bar?

A. About 3½ years or 4 years.

Q. I suppose you go to the cinema often?

A. I do.

Q. Do you live in the cantonment or in the city?

A. In the cantonment now, but I was living in the city until last year.

Q. Did you go to the cinema when you were in England?

A. Yes, very often.

Q. In London?

A. In London; and also on the Continent sometimes.

Q. Where do you go to the cinema here?

A. I go both to the cinema in the city and the cinema in the cantonment, but generally the cantonment.

Q. It is nearer to you now?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you think there is much difference between Western films shown in England and those shown here?

A. I do not think there is much difference.

Q. The same class of film is shown at both places?

A. I wouldn't say the same class; in London they are of a better quality.

Q. Quality yes, but the type of story, the scenes, etc.?

A. Yes, they are about the same.

Q. Take, for instance, what they call passionate love-making scenes.

A. I don't think there is any difference in that.

Q. I mean the pictures shown here are not worse than the pictures shown in England, if they are bad at all?

A. No, I don't think so.

Q. Of course you yourself don't consider them bad?

A. No, I don't consider them bad.

Q. You think some knowledge is essential?

A. Exactly.

Q. Do you think the cinema has any bad influence in this part of the country?

A. No, I don't think so.

Q. Do you think it has a good influence?

A. I don't think so either.

Q. Don't you think it opens the eyes of the public to conditions in other parts of the world?

A. Well, as far as the illiterate classes are concerned they only consider it as a *tamasha*.

Q. Still, they see how other people live and so on?

A. They may understand something.

Q. Although they may not be able to follow very much, still it opens their eyes to the possibility of higher living?

A. I agree. In that sense it is a good influence.

Q. I mean it widens their outlook?

A. Certainly it does widen their outlook to a certain extent but not to a large extent.

Q. Of course they are not able to take full advantage of what they see.

A. That is it.

Q. What class of people generally frequent the cinema?

A. In Peshawar city or in the cantonment?

Q. In Peshawar city?

A. I should say about 20 to 30 are educated and the rest are all illiterate.

Q. They belong to the masses. When you say "educated" do you mean the student population?

A. The student population, clerks, lawyers and such like.

Q. What class of films appeal to the illiterate class?

A. I think the films in which there are cowboy stunts.

Q. Action scenes, they like those more?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you think they care for love-making scenes, the illiterate classes?

A. I think they like them but I don't think they will miss them if they don't see them.

Q. They treat them with indifference?

A. I mean they take pleasure in it. If they see in the end the hero embrace the heroine they clap their hands.

Q. But if it turns out to be a tragedy?

A. I don't think they understand it.

Q. Do you think the cinema, I mean Western films, shown here in your province have any effect on the minds of the illiterate class so as to make them disregard Western life or have any disrespect for Western life?

A. No.

Q. Of course, there must be some exaggeration on the film. You don't take it as actual life?

A. I don't think there is any film in the world which shows actual life.

**Q.** I mean you think that the illiterate people here, specially as you are dealing with what our friends would call in this part of the country, a furnace or something of that sort—do you think it has any effect on the minds of the people here—I have already asked you that question—generating any feeling of disrespect or disregard or contempt for the Europeans, either man or woman?

**A.** No.

**Q.** Now another aspect of the question is, take the youth of our country,—of course, you class yourself amongst the youth or do you want to class yourself as.....

**A.** Whatever you like to class me as, I am satisfied with it.

**Q.** Now do you think that the Western films shown here have any demoralising effect on them, such as creating a taste for objectionable things?

**A.** No. I don't think so. I think that Indian theatres show worse things than Indian films.

**Q.** You mean theatres in India or do you mean purely Indian theatres?

**A.** Purely Indian theatres.

**Q.** What have you in mind, I don't know?

**A.** In Peshawar we generally have a theatre once a year or so, and I have been to some *tamashas* there and I think the film has a much higher standard of morality than the theatre here.

**Q.** I am sorry to hear that. I don't know what is shown here, but of course, in the matter of nudity?

**A.** There is no nudity. I have not seen any nudity on the screen either.

**Q.** But there are some things which are only an apology for clothing. Anyhow, I daresay you have seen passionate embracing and kissing on the film.

**A.** But that sort of thing one sees also in Indian theatres.

**Q.** Do they kiss on the stage?

**A.** They don't kiss, but the jokes which they pass between each other are just as bad.

**Q.** Oh yes, the jokes are sometimes vulgar.

**A.** I think a kiss on the screen is not worse than a joke on the stage.

**Q.** I do not want to disagree with you there. Still one is often told that these things have a demoralising effect on the youth of the country. Do you meet many college students and the youth who go to the cinema?

**A.** I don't think they are being demoralised by the cinema.

**Q.** Is there any fear or risk of it?

**A.** I don't think so.

**Q.** I suppose you have seen Indian films?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Do you like them?

**A.** No.

**Q.** Why not?

**A.** Because they show very bad acting, very ugly actors and actresses, and the plot is always bad.

**Q.** You are right there. They cannot get the best women to act in our country for our screen.

**A.** But I don't think much better of the actors, and the plot is very bad. I have always been disappointed whenever I have been to see an Indian film.

**Q.** Naturally. I don't know if you have seen the recent ones. There are some which may appeal even to educated people.

**A.** There may be, but I have not seen one.

**Q.** But I suppose the Indian public care for these Indian films?



A. I don't think the Peshawar public care much for them. Perhaps if there was a religious drama, taken, say, from the Ramayana, the Hindus would be very keen on seeing it. Similarly if there was any drama from Muhammadan history, the Muhammadans would like to go, but they do not go because they like the film.

Q. But because they like the story and want to see it acted?

A. Yes. Taking the Indian film as a film, I don't think there is anything good in it.

Q. I don't think they have developed a critical taste in that direction yet.

A. You are right, I agree.

Q. But still we are told they attract large audiences these Indian films?

A. Yes, on the first night; but then those who go on the first night, when they go back never have a good word to say as far as I know. I am speaking mostly of the educated classes.

Q. Would you like to see the Indian film industry improved?

A. Oh certainly.

Q. And do you think that it should be encouraged also.

A. Of course.

Q. And would you approve of such an idea, that in order to encourage the film industry a gradually increasing percentage of Indian films should be compulsorily shown in the cinemas—a certain percentage?

A. I don't know. I think that would be sending money into the pockets of people who make bad films.

Q. But would it not encourage them to make better films? I will put it to you like this—a certain percentage of approved films passed by a board, not of art critics but of ordinary people like you and I, will you approve of a quota system like that being enforced in that case?

A. Yes.

Q. And do you think there is any chance of the film industry taking root in this province as an indigenous industry?

A. We are very backward.

Q. Still you hope to rise?

A. We will think of it then, but at present I don't think there is any hope.

Q. Notwithstanding your natural advantages of scenery and the make up of the people?

A. Yes, we have those advantages but there is no capital.

Q. Do you think there is any acting genius in the people of your province? Do you think they will do well for the screen if they are trained?

A. They might.

Q. And what do you suggest should be done; do you think anything should be done by Government to encourage the growth of the Indian industry?

A. Yes, I think if our boys were sent America it would be a good thing.

Q. To study the technique?

A. Yes.

Q. Have you been in Germany at all?

A. Yes, I have been in Germany.

Q. They say Germany produces some very good films.

A. In the days when I was there there were not so many big firms.

Q. Was that some time ago?

A. In 1922-23.

Q. I suppose you advocate the introduction of educational films for mass education and also for school education?

A. Yes, certainly.

Q. You think Government should produce such public utility films?

A. Of course.

Q. Have you been to any studio at all when you were in Europe?

A. No, I have not.

Q. Suppose you send students abroad for getting the technical training, do you think they will meet with a good reception in the States and other places.

A. I don't know.

*Colonel Crawford:* I have only one question to ask. The Chairman has brought out most of the things I wanted to ask you about; but I noticed you said that Hindu audiences will go to Hindu mythological plays and Muhammadan audiences to Muhammadan plays. A witness this morning suggested to us that if we should develop the Indian film industry on those lines—that is, by the production of mythological pictures—it would operate to maintain the existing cleavage between the communities. What is your opinion of such a suggestion?

A. Well, if the films are such in which they show a fight between Hindu and Muhammadans, it will have that effect.

Q. I don't mean that. I mean where a film is solely for Hindus and another solely for Muhammadans, you gradually get a separation of your audience; the Hindus go one night, the Muhammadans go on a different night. They don't mix. The idea he gave me was that it was a possible danger.

A. I don't think it is a danger because the mythology is different; and the production of mythological films would not increase it.

*Chairman:* You think Muhammadans would not go to see Hindu mythology.

A. They do. I have been to some myself.

Q. And there are several Muhammadans like that?

A. Yes.

*Colonel Crawford:* They will draw, that is your opinion?

A. Certainly they will draw.

*Mr. Green:* I was interested in your statement that the virile population of this province do not put much store by love-making scenes. They like a happy ending, I understand?

A. Of course, they do.

Q. The rest does not move them at all? Your point is they simply regard it as part of the story but possibly not an essential part?

A. Not necessarily a very essential part.

Q. And you don't think that has any effect on the younger members of the audience who are of an impressionable age?

A. I don't think so.

Q. Less effect than bad jokes sometimes have?

A. Yes.

**Oral Evidence of Baba NARINJAN SINGH BEDI, B.A., Jagirdar and Headmaster, R. B. S. Kanshi Nand Sanatan Dharam High School, Peshawar, on Thursday, the 1st December 1927.**

*Chairman:* You are the Headmaster of the Sanatan Dharam High School?

A. Yes.

Q. How long have you been here.

A. I have been here in the school for 10 years.

Q. Are you a native of Peshawar?

A. No, but I have been here for the last 20 years.

Q. Which is your native place.

A. I belong to the Gurdaspur district, but I have become a resident of this place and my brother is also here.

Q. Your family has settled here?

A. Yes.

Q. You stay in the city?

A. Yes.

Q. Your school is also in the city?

A. Yes.

Q. Is it a big school?

A. Yes, it is a flourishing school.

Q. What is the strength of the school?

A. About 600 boys.

Q. Are there also any Mussulman boys in the school?

A. One-third are Muhammadan boys.

Q. And you teach up to Matriculation.

A. Yes.

Q. What do you call it here? The School leaving examination?

A. University examination, school leaving, as well as Matriculation. We prepare boys for both.

Q. I suppose most of the boys—what percentage of your boys go to the college course?

A. About 60 per cent. because we have got two colleges at Peshawar and it is very easy for them to pass the Matriculation and similarly to pass the B.A., so they go to college.

Q. And do you go to the cinema often?

A. I have been to the cinema.

Q. Pretty frequently?

A. Yes.

Q. Which? The city cinema?

A. Yes, because it is very near our institution.

Q. Your boys also go.

A. They do.

Q. You have been going to the cinema for some years since its institution?

A. Yes.

Q. Now, do you find any improvement in the films being shown here to-day?

A. There is a great improvement because formerly there were 3 cinemas at one time in the city quite close to each other. The Imperial Cinema showed good films while the others had rubbish. Therefore they had to close down and now only one cinema, the Imperial Cinema, is there and it is showing very good films.

Q. What do you mean by rubbish?

A. Well, they did not exhibit very interesting films because here in Peshawar people like much acting fighting and therefore they appreciate those films which exhibit them.

Q. You are talking of Western films now?

A. Yes.

Q. Do people care for any of these social dramas where there is love-making, this, that and the other?

A. They do like them but in certain cases they may have a bad effect as well because some of the emotional and passionate love scenes misrepresent Western life.

**Q.** In your opinion it does or may have that effect?

**A.** It may have. I cannot say definitely. There is no specific instance that it does.

**Q.** Apart from that, what is the fear you have in mind?

**A.** Well, at least it misrepresents Western civilisation to a certain extent because in comparison with Indian civilisation people may have a bad opinion of it.

**Q.** People have not many opportunities of seeing the Westerner's actual life?

**A.** No, because this province is very backward.

**Q.** They don't come into contact with Western people as much as at Lahore for instance?

**A.** Yes, very few of them do so. The people are not so educated, very few of them go to foreign countries.

**Q.** In that way you think they may misunderstand Western ways?

**A.** Yes, I am definite about that. On posters sometimes they show very objectionable pictures such as the hero and heroine kissing, and they were objected to.

**Q.** By whom?

**A.** By the public.

**Q.** And then what happened?

**A.** Now they don't show them.

**Q.** When did this happen?

**A.** I think about 2 years back. There were certain posters like that, the hero and heroine were shown kissing and embracing each other.

**Q.** And people did not like it?

**A.** No, they did not like that.

**Q.** And that was afterwards dropped?

**A.** Yes, dropped, they are no longer exhibited.

**Q.** You mean the audience objected the people in the city objected?

**A.** Yes, certainly. Before even ladies attended the cinema and they reserved some days for them. That also was dropped, because there was a great cry by the people that females should not be sent to the cinema because it is a Muhammadan province and Muhammadans and others might have teased the females there. We have a number of social service societies here and they issued posters against females going to cinemas.

**Q.** You mean propaganda was carried on not to allow the ladies to go?

**A.** Yes, and now no females attend the cinema, although formerly it used to be a great attraction for the ladies.

**Q.** What is the objection? Do you mean fear of misrepresentation?

**A.** Moreover, side by side with those dramas like the Birth of Sri Krishna they might have shown these love-scenes.

**Q.** They thought there was a risk of their seeing those posters?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Now those posters are not allowed?

**A.** No.

**Q.** You don't see any objectionable posters or hand bills now-a-days?

**A.** No.

**Q.** Do your boys go to the cinema?

**A.** Some of them do.

**Q.** Do you notice any effect on them?

**A.** Nothing worth mentioning.

**Q.** Either good or bad?

**A.** I cannot say. I have not noticed.

Q. Do you think there is any impression, good or bad, on the boys who go to the cinema.

A. No, mostly high class boys go.

Q. You don't think it has any effect on them that you have noticed?

A. No.

Q. Now, the films most exhibited here, what are they? Love-making scenes?

A. They are also exhibited sometimes but people here like much fighting and also some Indian films like "Turki Hoor" and "The Thief of Baghdad." Those films attracted a great audience although the rates were increased by the exhibitors.

Q. Do you think Indian films are improving in their make-up? You have seen them now for some years.

A. They are improving. It depends upon supply and demand. People now like them, therefore the get up is also improving and should be better.

Q. Now do you want to encourage Indian films?

A. Certainly.

Q. Do you think Government should take steps to improve them?

A. I think it should better be left to private agencies. Government might help them.

Q. What sort of help do you think Government should give them?

A. Financial help as well as in providing experts.

Q. To give the necessary training either by scholarships or getting out experts?

A. Yes, because the industry is still in its infancy and unless Government helps private enterprises they cannot flourish.

Q. Do you read much about educational films in other countries.

A. I am not in touch with them but I am of opinion that if those films are introduced here for educational purposes it would be a great help.

Q. In your classes, for instance, would you like to use such films to illustrate the lessons?

A. Yes, films throwing light on different aspects of health and education.

Q. When you teach a lesson you think you could give your lesson better with the aid of a film?

A. Certainly that will help a great deal.

Q. And you will be able to command the attention of the boys better than by merely a book lesson?

A. Yes, it will make them more attentive to their lessons.

Q. If it is followed by a good plot and so on?

A. Certainly.

Q. It will be a very useful adjunct and make education effective?

A. Quite so.

Q. And would you like such films to be produced in the country?

A. Certainly, I am definite about that. It would be better produced in the country because Indians will be in a better position to show Indian life and such things.

Q. But if you have to deal with other parts of the world?

A. I think that is a better way to help Indian civilisation by means of these films.

Q. But I mean, for instance, you give a lesson in geography, if you deal with South Africa, do you think it would be useful to have a film dealing with South African life and all that?

A. There is no harm in that.

Q. You put it only at that? Are there many people here who can write attractive stories?

A. No, there are not many.

Q. Either in the vernacular or in English?

A. I cannot be very definite about it, because this province is very backward.

Q. Notwithstanding that you say that about 60 per cent. of your boys go to college?

A. I am talking about the preparation of dramas and so forth. I may say that the Imperial Cinema Company had arranged with Madan Theatres, Ltd., to produce films in this province. They have not begun work yet. They erected a building adjacent to their cinema theatre about three months ago.

Q. Do you mean they have built a building or a studio for making films?

A. I mean a studio is nearly ready for making films. I have got full information about this because of the fact that these people were negotiating for a plot close to our school, and they were willing to pay about Rs. 10,000 for a plot for 10 years.

Q. You say that when Indian films like "Krishna Janma" and other pictures are shown, they attract a large audience?

A. Yes.

Q. Both Hindus and Muhammadans?

A. I cannot be definite about Muhammadans, but Hindus go in large numbers, and films like "Turki Hoor" and "The Thief of Baghdad" attracted large numbers of both Hindus and Muhammadans.

Q. When Hindu mythological films are shown, do Muhammadans also attend?

A. They do attend but not in large numbers. But if common films like social dramas and serials are shown, they attract large numbers of both Hindus and Muhammadans.

Q. Are you satisfied with the tone of the Indian pictures.—I don't mean their technique,—but I mean their plot, story and so on?

A. Their tone requires some improvement.

Q. Are you satisfied generally with the censorship?

A. I think it should be a little more rigorous.

Q. In what respect?

A. In certain cases some objectionable films are shown, though they may not be objectionable from the Government point of view.

Mr. Green: What do you mean by objectionable, we want to know that?

A. Sometimes they exhibit emotional pictures.

Chairman: You mean that you don't want to have any kissing or love scenes?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you think the films will be attractive without kissing or love scenes?

A. There is no harm in showing love scenes, but they should not be very emotional. Now-a-days people are taking to western life.

Q. Do you think that such films would lead the people to adopt western life?

A. Yes.

Q. I suppose you belong to the Sanatan Dharma School and you want Hindu orthodoxy to be maintained and you don't want any departure from that?

A. Yes, you are right.

Mr. Neogy: Are you a Sikh or a Hindu?

A. I am both. I descend from Sri Guru Nanak, and I belong to the sect to which Baba Gurbaksh Singh Bedi belongs. He also belongs to my family.

*Chairman:* Do you think if a class were opened in the collegiate course for training people in photography, it would attract students?

A. I think so.

Q. Would you attach it to a High School or to a College?

A. It should be attached to a college, and not to a High School.

*Colonel Crawford:* What is the average age of the youth of your school who goes up to the college?

A. About 15 or 16 years.

Q. You say that a certain number of boys do go to the cinemas?

A. Yes.

Q. And you are not aware of any harmful effects?

A. I have not noticed any personally.

Q. Do you notice any effects, not from the harmful point of view, but from the educational point of view? Do you notice them talking about the films they have seen?

A. They may be talking, but I have not heard anything.

Q. I was interested in what you said about ladies not going to the cinema. What was the object of preventing the ladies from going to the cinema?

A. There is great communal tension here, as you all know, and some of the ladies were once molested by Muhammadans on their way, and since then many ladies don't care to go to the cinema.

Q. So it is mainly the fear of molestation that keeps them back and not because of any fear that the cinema will have any harmful effects on them?

A. No, nothing of that sort. Once some ladies were molested on their way to the cinema. Ordinarily the cinema exhibitors have got proper purdah arrangements for them inside the theatre, but on their way they were molested by Muhammadans once. Ladies usually go to see films like "Savitri" or "Krishna Janma," but the fear of their being molested on the way keeps them back.

*Mr. Green:* You said kissing and passionate scenes were harmful? I suppose what you had in mind was you had no objection to such scenes being represented without any exaggeration?

A. That is what I meant.

Q. I also gathered that you said that a kissing scene in itself was regarded by the people as indecent.

A. In the case of posters such things are objectionable.

Q. Do you think that the posters are more demoralising than the films?

A. Yes, because posters are read by a larger number of people, and some people may not be able to appreciate the meaning of the posters, whereas only those who actually go to the cinema show will be able to see the pictures, and understand their significance.

Q. If the posters demoralise the average man, why not the cinema films?

A. In no way do the posters demoralise the people.

Q. I suppose going to the cinema has not done any moral harm to the students of your school?

A. No.

Q. It leaves the boys quite unaffected in your opinion?

A. Yes.

Q. I gathered from you that public opinion is strong among cinema owners not to exhibit posters. That is extremely interesting.

A. Yes.

Q. The Chairman asked you a question about classes being opened for teaching cinema work and also for cinema acting. Do you think your school boys would join such classes for learning cinema acting? Or rather, do you think that parents will allow their boys to take lessons in cinema

acting with the idea that the boys should become professional actors for the cinema?

A. I think there are some parents who would allow their boys to join such classes.

Q. Do you think there are many such parents in this province? Is not the profession of cinema acting looked down upon here?

A. I don't think so, because people here are very fond of music. Peshawar is well known for singing and music. I don't think there will be any loss of reputation if one becomes an actor.

Q. In Bombay we were told that singing was regarded as a demoralising thing?

A. As long as one confines himself to high class singing it is not regarded as demoralising. In fact, we teach singing to our boys in our schools and colleges and it is considered a recreation.

Mr. Neogy: Your school is managed by a Committee, I suppose?

A. Yes.

Q. On that committee the Sanatan people are represented?

A. Yes.

Q. Is religious teaching imparted to the boys of your school?

A. Yes.

Q. Do the Muhammadan boys also attend any class for religious instruction?

A. There is no separate arrangement for giving them religious education, but in that period they generally spend their time in the school library. They are not allowed to go out.

Q. Mythological stories are also occasionally recited in such classes?

A. Yes, but those are taught only to Hindu boys.

Q. In the text-books for your boys I believe there are stories dealing with the lives of distinguished Hindu and Muhammadan saints?

A. Yes, some text-books have got moral lessons and biographies of distinguished people. The History book for our 5th standard boys contains the life of Mahommed as well as the life of Krishna. Hitherto Sri Ramchandra was described as the son of a Raja and Mahommed was also not properly described. I mean in respectful terms. A special sub-committee was appointed to revise the text-books, and representatives of all religions including the Hindu, Sikh, Muhammedan and Christian religions were present at those meetings. It was decided that Ram Chandrajji should be described as Maryada Purshotam Bhagwan Ramchandra and it was decided by Muhammedan representatives that Mahommed should be described as Mahommed the Prophet. Now this revised text-book is being read by both the Hindu and Mahommedan boys, and no objection is raised by any one. I may also say that as far as the student community is concerned the relations are very cordial between them. They may be different with the public, but so far as the student community is concerned, their relations are very cordial. We have got Muhammadan teachers too in our school.

Mr. Green: You mean that one thing is written and the other is read?

Mr. Neogy: You mean the books were revised, and certain descriptions of certain saintly persons were changed and put in more respectful terms?

A. The books have been reprinted with those changes. I am on the text-book committee, and I revised those books.

Q. I put this question because in the morning a witness stated that if Indian films were to represent either Hindu mythological subjects or, say, Muhammadan subjects, the exhibition of those films might lead to dividing the audience, and it would drive away the Muslim audience?

A. I don't think so, because as long as the films are interesting, people will go and see them.

Chairman: You say that the text-books were revised by a Committee on which there were both Hindu and Muslim Members?



A. I was a member of that sub-committee, I represented both Hindus and Sikhs, and there were other Members representing the Christian and Muhammadan communities. There we decided that the descriptions of these saintly persons should be given in more respectful terms. For instance, Guru Nanak was described as Sri Guru Baba Nanak, Lord Krishna was described as Bhagwan Shri Krishna. It was also decided at that conference that when the Inspectors go round to inspect the various schools in the province they should question the Hindu boys on Mahommed's life and question the Mahommedan boys on the lives of Hindu saints, so that a better understanding may be brought about between the two communities.

Mr. Neogy: Similarly, if films depicting subjects of interest to the different communities were to be shown, that also might improve the relations between the two communities?

A. I think so. There is no apprehension of any kind of trouble, because we have been seeing "Turki Hoor" to which large numbers of people of both the communities went. As long as the films are interesting, all people will go.

**\*Oral Evidence of Mr. ABDUL RAHIM RIAYAZ, Headmaster, Islamia High School, Peshawar City, on Thursday, the 1st December 1927.**

Chairman: You are Mr. Abdul Rahim Riayaz?

A. Yes, Sir.

Q. The headmaster of the Islamia High School, Peshawar City?

A. Yes.

Q. How long have you been holding that place?

A. I have been in this place for the last four years. Before that I was in the Punjab. I have 12 years' experience in this line.

Q. How many students have you in your high school?

A. I have got about 475.

Q. You have got them from the primary class upwards?

A. Yes, Sir.

Q. And you have got both Hindu and Mussulman boys?

A. No, Sir. All Mussulman boys. There are so many Hindu schools here, even they are crowded with Mussulman students. Non-Muslims form only 10 or 15 per cent. of the population and they are running four schools. We have got only one.

Q. You live in the city, I suppose?

A. Yes, Sir.

Q. Do you go to the cinema often?

A. Yes, Sir.

Q. To the Imperial?

A. Sometimes the Imperial, otherwise I go generally to the other cinemas, here in the cantonment.

Q. You go more often to the cantonment than to the city cinemas?

A. Yes, Sir.

Q. Why is that?

A. But I often go to this cinema as well.

Q. But I thought you said you generally go to the cantonment show. Why do you prefer that?

A. There the audience is more civilised.

Q. You mean you get cultured company?

A. Yes. Here it is mostly illiterate people who go.

**Q.** Not because there is any difference in the films shown?

**A.** Not on account of that.

**Q.** I suppose, so far as western films are concerned, the same films are shown in the cantonments as are shown in the city?

**A.** Yes, Sir.

**Q.** Have you seen many Indian films?

**A.** Yes, Sir.

**Q.** But you see them only in the city?

**A.** I have seen them here and also in Amritsar which is my native place.

**Q.** I suppose you go to Amritsar very often?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** And do your students also go to the cinema?

**A.** I don't allow them, Sir. Because generally I find that the films shown in the bigger cinemas are not worthy to be seen by students.

**Q.** But what control have you?

**A.** So far as we can. We have got our scout system. Some of them are on the watch.

**Q.** Generally you don't allow them to go to the cinema at all?

**A.** But whenever there is an educational or any other film being screened, I let them go.

**Q.** I should like to know what you do? You get a programme?

**A.** Yes, Sir. Or the manager of the cinema he sends me a programme. I go through the details of the programme and if I find the film is objectionable in any way, I disallow my students to go there.

**Q.** Every week you make a selection? Once a week you make a selection?

**A.** Once a week I make a selection and tell the boys they may go to this and not to the other. For instance, there was a film "Rupert of Hentzau." That is of course included in the course of the matriculation examination. I specially asked the manager to send for that film and he showed it to my students.

**Q.** Only to your students?

**A.** No, I mean it was sent for at my recommendation and the students of other schools were also invited to see it. Now, that was more to instruct them in the lessons they had. So that they may see everything connected with the story.

**Q.** So apparently you believe in the film as a good adjunct to the education which you give?

**A.** Yes. Provided they are not immoral.

**Q.** Of course educational films cannot be immoral.

**A.** But there are very few of them.

**Q.** You would like to have more?

**A.** Very many more.

**Q.** You want to have many more. You think it will be more effective in the schools?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Probably you would like to have a show in your own school.

**A.** If the school can afford it.

**Q.** Do you think, if the Department can afford it, it will be a very useful adjunct to your school? Have you had a cinema show in your school?

**A.** I have myself ordered some slides because we cannot get the cinema.

**Q.** You want to exhibit magic lantern slides?

**A.** Yes, to teach geography and other things with the help of that.

**Q.** Were you trained in any training college?

A. Yes, I have been trained.

Q. Have you seen any catalogue of educational films produced in other countries?

A. No, Sir. I have written to one or two firms at Lahore who deal in science apparatus but they could not supply anything in that line.

Q. Have you never heard of Patel and Sons in Lahore?

A. I have heard the name. Only three or four days ago they sent me a list of films.

Q. Have you seen their catalogue?

A. Yes, Sir. I have now seen it.

Q. You would like to have these films in your school for instruction?

A. A few at the beginning I would like.

Q. Now you say you prevent your students going to the cinema. Supposing it is mere action, nothing about love scenes, even then you disallow them?

A. Yes, Sir. Because generally I have boys up to the age of 15 in my school,—there are very few over 15—and I do not think they should go.

Q. To any film?

A. No, Sir, to those depicting scenes of love.

Q. That I can understand. But what about other films? What class of films do you choose for your boys?

A. For instance there are some films that depict scenes from the circus.

Q. You mean horse-racing or any of these comic films. Do you allow comic films—Charlie Chaplin?

A. Yes, Sir, I allow that.

Q. Only where there is dramatic love shown you don't like it?

A. Scenes of extreme love I dislike.

Q. How do you distinguish between extreme love and moderate love?

A. Generally, Sir, very few students go to the cinema from my school and I know about some of those who do and give them casual instructions.

Q. So they are guided by you more or less?

A. Yes.

Q. You seem to be a very fortunate master in that. You don't think that students of the age of which your students are should see love scenes?

A. No, Sir. Ordinary love scenes they may.

Q. What do you mean by ordinary love scenes.

A. For instance, in the film I have just mentioned "Rupert of Hentzau" there is a love scene and we teach them in the college about the book. But where you see scenes of extreme love and passion on the screen in front of you, it is different.

Q. You think they are not going to learn them in future in their own lives?

A. But not at that age. Later on they may. There is no restriction on them as soon as they enter college life. They may go anywhere they like.

Q. You don't object to college students going?

A. I have objections but they cannot be controlled.

Q. But these little boys can be? You don't want to trust to the judgment of the parents in such cases?

A. I think they are better judges than ourselves. If they allow them, even in my school if the parents allow them I will have no objection.

Q. Anyway you are exercising a check in this way.

A. Yes.

Q. And as regards college students do you think the cinema has any evil influence?

A. I don't think it has an evil influence, because they read dramas and novels and poems,—several kinds of poems but most of them are about love.

Q. You don't mind their going? They are not affected by them one way or the other?

A. They realise some responsibility.

Q. So that probably you would rather advocate that certain films should be classified as fit for children? Would that be desirable?

A. Yes, Sir, if it is practicable.

Q. As fit for children. So that the parents may know what sort of films they may send their children to and headmasters may also know what sort of film to send their boys to. In passing the film the censorship board might also add a clause "fit to be shown to children." What age would you advocate? What age limit would you give up to which they should see such films?

A. Up to the ages of between 14 and 16.

Q. You won't prohibit children going to these things but it will be an advice to parents and headmasters to see that children do not go to the other things which are not certified as being fit for children?

A. Yes, Sir.

Q. Apart from the children are you satisfied generally that the films which you see in Peshawar are all right?

A. Most of them are all right.

Q. But I mean have they no evil influence either on the educated class or on the uneducated class?

A. If they have some evil effect they have also some good effect. There are good and evil, both.

Q. Which predominates?

A. I think good predominates.

Q. You would not like to see the cinemas closed, but on the other hand you would like to see them spread.

A. And spread widely.

Q. Not only educational films but even ordinary films?

A. Yes, Sir.

Q. So you think it does more good than harm. And does it do any harm at all? Apart from these love scenes and children, does it do any harm at all?

A. To the illiterate class it does, because they cannot understand it.

Q. But what is the harm done to them if they cannot understand it?

A. They may misunderstand it.

Q. Supposing they misunderstand it, what follows? Does anything follow to them?

A. For instance, they see a western film being screened in front of them and they don't know the social customs and things of that country and they may have some very bad impression of the ways of life in their society.

Q. Then how are they affected?

A. They may have a very bad opinion of those western people and they may cherish hatred or disrespect for them.

Q. That is your fear?

A. And moreover they may try to introduce those social customs in their own society for which the country is not prepared at the present moment.

Q. But how would they try to introduce it?

A. They may copy.

Q. You mean in their own lives. But what prevents a man from going to England and coming back and doing these things?

A. They are generally educated people and they understand and they belong to good families who understand that.

Q. But do you really think the illiterate uneducated man would try to imitate western life?

A. They may. It is not certain.

Q. On what is this fear of yours founded? Is it based on the newspapers or on your own experience?

A. I have heard people talking when they are coming out of the cinema.

Q. What do they say?

A. About the strange customs and habits of these people.

Q. That is all right. It is not our custom, that is all. Do they not see westerners here?

A. When I was at Amritsar I saw young boys playing. As soon as they returned from the cinema, next day they began to introduce some of these things in their play.

Q. What play?

A. Playing among themselves. Indian games.

Q. What is it they introduced?

A. Sometimes jumping from very high places.

Q. Then how is it misunderstanding of the western life, if it is merely jumping and playing?

A. I saw only that.

Q. I want to understand on what you base your fear? Probably you are led away by some articles which appear in the newspapers. What you mention is quite innocent, such as boys trying to jump about like English boys.

A. But generally I have seen these illiterates not having a good opinion about their social customs.

Q. Have they a good opinion of the social customs of the Europeans whom they see?—not on the film, I mean in actual life?

A. They don't mix with them so much or have opportunities of studying them.

Q. You want to keep them in ignorance of the life in other parts of the world?

A. No, they should not be kept in ignorance.

Q. Then what is the point? Don't you think education would be the proper remedy for what you fear?—not to cut them off from this. Better to educate them. That is their life, this is our life. And that way they will learn too. Therefore, your fear is not based on any actual instance. The only thing you mentioned was boys playing. You have nothing else to say?

A. I have simply heard the people talking about the difference in customs, which of course every Indian would dislike, for instance kissing in public.

Q. But we are educated and we don't like it. Do we like it?

A. But the educated people would know it is their social customs.

Q. Even that. Many educated men have come here and said we consider it is their ordinary life.

A. But the illiterate people don't understand.

Q. Educated people don't understand. We had many people here who came before us as witnesses who understood that was the ordinary life of the west. If it really misrepresents their life, they produce it. We don't produce it. Should he not take care himself. Why should you be anxious, as the "Times of India" puts it, why should you be anxious, about them when they are not?

A. Well, when they produce it they think it might not be sent to India. They prepare them for all countries.

Q. But they don't consider it as a misrepresentation. Why should you consider it as a misrepresentation?

*Mr. Coatman:* I think some of us do consider it to be a misrepresentation.

A. I don't consider it myself as a misrepresentation. What I mean is that these illiterate people misunderstand.

*Chairman:* Well, I am afraid too much weight is thrown on the illiterate people. What is your view?

A. My view is that they are not objectionable.

Q. I mean, after all there must be some exaggeration in any film or any stage. Does the stage represent actual life? Have you seen any English dramas?

A. No, Sir. I have not seen any.

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Q. Or have you seen any English companies play?

A. No, Sir, I have not.

Q. Of course, you are in a backward tract. And you have not been to Europe?

A. No, Sir, I have not been.

Q. But you say you go to Amritsar. Don't theatrical troupes go there?

A. No, Sir.

Q. I suppose you see some of the illustrated papers that come from abroad? Do you like all the pictures you see there? What effect will it have on the illiterate classes if they see it?

A. I cannot say anything about that.

Q. Do you want then that there should be a stricter censorship?

A. I don't recommend that. Because almost all the films are censored before they come here. But some of them pass through I don't know how.

Q. But still, I mean you have not seen many objectionable films? Now and then you have come across films that might have been omitted in your opinion.

A. Yes, Sir.

Q. And you don't recommend stricter censorship on that account?

A. No, Sir.

Q. Now, would you advocate educational films to be prepared by Government themselves or through private agency?

A. If private agencies take up that business so much the better, otherwise they must be prepared by the Government. Not only educational but also health and temperance as well.

Q. You would not have any bar attached to a cinema? You would abolish all bars attached to cinemas?

A. Yes, Sir.

Q. You want public utility films to be produced in large numbers and made available to the public?

A. Yes, Sir.

Q. And do you believe in the encouragement of the growth of the Indian film industry?

A. Yes, Sir, very strongly.

Q. Do you think Indian films will become more and more popular?

A. Yes, Sir.

Q. Are they more popular now?

A. Yes, Sir.

Q. Coming from Bombay and Bengal, I suppose?

A. Yes.

Q. You have seen many of them, both mythological and others?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you object to Hindu mythology pictures being shown?—you your self?

**A. Personally I have no objection.**

**Q. When these mythological pictures were shown I suppose Mussulmans also attended?**

**A. Oh yes.**

**Q. In large numbers?**

**A. No, Sir, very few of them.**

**Q. And when any Muhammadan story was shown Hindus also attended?**

**A. Yes, Sir.**

**Q. It appeals to them as much as to the Mussulmans?**

**A. Oh, yes. There was this "Laila Majnun." I liked it very much. And others also.**

**Q. Was it very popular among Hindus and Mussulmans?**

**A. Yes, everywhere.**

**Q. And there are many such things which can be produced in our country which would be common to both?**

**A. Yes, Sir.**

**Q. This morning we had a gentlemen saying that you should not produce Hindu films or Hindu mythology because Mussulmans will object to them?**

**A. They will have no objection unless there is any attack on others. If it is only Hindu mythology no one will object. As a matter of fact they have appeared.**

**Q. You have seen our questionnaire?**

**A. Yes, Sir.**

**Q. Have you anything else to add to what I have put to you?**

**A. No.**

**Mr. Neogy:** You generally try to persuade your students not to attend certain shows. Have those efforts been successful so far?

**A. They have not been successful. I have done my best, but because there are only 10 or 12 out of 425 who see cinemas, so far as they are concerned I have not been successful.**

**Q. So these persuasive efforts may prove of success?**

**A. Yes, Sir, they will.**

**Q. Did your students ever go to an Indian film?**

**A. I don't think so.**

**Q. Did you recommend any Indian film as being fit to be seen by them?**

**A. Very few have been seen by them and since my coming here there was one only examined. At that time no boys came to me for advice and so I did not advise them.**

**Q. You attach some importance to films dealing with historical subjects. Do you think there will be any objection if Indian history were to be represented on the screen?**

**A. I have no objection to it but only that part should not be included in the film where there is some difference between Hindus and Mussulman views. For instance the life of Sivaji. Hindus would prepare it from their point of view. But if the same is shown to the Mussulman it is just possible they may object to it. Only that part should be omitted which is likely to embitter communal feeling.**

**Q. That applies to Muhammadan subjects also?**

**A. Yes.**

**Q. Subject to that you have no objection to Indian historical subjects being shown on the screen?**

**A. No. On the other hand, I think they would help education.**

**Q. Now, as regards the social customs of the west which may not be understood by our own people properly, so far as the orthodox Muhammadans**

are concerned—I think the generality of the Muhammadan population in this province is orthodox?

A. Yes.

Q. And their idea about *purdah* is very strict?

A. Yes.

Q. They do not like that any woman should not observe the *purdah*?

A. Yes.

Q. But yet they see European ladies going about, some Indian ladies too, who go about not observing *purdah*?

A. Yes.

Q. Do they think ill of them simply because they do not observe *purdah*?

A. They dislike it, but they have come to know so much about them that they think it is their social custom.

Q. They have grown accustomed to it?

A. Yes.

Q. And they do not mind it?

A. Yes.

Q. For instance ladies riding in the streets.

A. They do not mind it.

Q. Supposing they continue seeing certain aspects of western life, they would similarly become accustomed to them?

A. Yes.

Q. And there would be no risk of any danger arising from it?

A. No.

Q. That is to say, there would be no misapprehension or misunderstanding?

A. No.

Q. It is only a question of time?

A. Yes.

Q. And the more they go to these pictures, the more will they become accustomed to these?

A. Yes.

Q. And from that point of view it would be a good thing, because they would get more and more accustomed to the western ways of life?

A. I have not understood your question.

Q. They can thus understand Europeans better, cannot they?

A. So long as they do not imitate or adopt those social customs I have no objection to these things being shown.

Q. Your apprehension is that they might adopt some of those practices which you consider to be not right from your point of view?

A. Yes.

Mr. Green: I understand you would welcome historical films?

A. Yes.

Q. Would your community have any objection to Muhammadan ladies, Begums, etc., being shown in historical plays?

A. They would object.

Q. Therefore your plays would have to be entirely without ladies, or they would have to be behind the *purdah*? This occurred to me when Mr. Neogy was asking you questions. You think they would object?

A. Yes. As a part of the harem, we call them begums, they should be excluded from historical plays.

Q. I hesitate to say anything about Indian history, but there have been certain Moghul ladies who had a very large influence and had even, I think, taken the place of the Emperors on occasions?



A. Yes, for instance, Nur-Jehan.

Q. I was thinking of her. But you think that Muhammadan sentiment would strongly disapprove of Nur-Jehan being shown on the screen?

A. Yes. A film has been prepared of that, and there was a great deal of hue and cry about it.

Q. It would follow that your historical plays must be only Hindu?

A. Although Nur-Jehan ruled instead of Jehangir, we believe that she used to pass orders behind the *purdah*.

Chairman: Supposing they are shown from behind the *purdah* you have no objection?

A. They will have objection.

Q. With *burkhas*—even then they would object?

A. Yes, because among the Muhammadans it is part of their faith that ladies should not go out without *purdah*.

Q. But supposing they are shown on the screen with their *burkhas* on?

A. If it is historical they would have objection to it, but I have seen films in which Arab ladies and others have been screened with veils on.

Mr. Green: Then they could only show Muhammadan women of the lower sort who do not observe *purdah*?

A. Though they may be of the lower sort, even then there would be objection.

Mr. Neogy: Raiziya Begum I do not think observed *purdah*.

A. In some histories it is said they used to sit in open *darbar*, while in other histories it is said that they used to give orders in *purdah*.

Chairman: Supposing the Begum of Bhopal was depicted on some historical picture, do you think people would object?

A. When she went to Europe, I saw in the papers there were pictures of the Begum and the people objected to it.

Mr. Green: Would you have the censor cut out any parts of films which showed a Muhammadan lady?

A. You mean in the present films?

Q. Any film, in deference to the feelings of the Muhammadan community?

A. So far as the feelings of the Muhammadan community are concerned, they must be cut off.

## LUCKNOW.

**Written Statement of Khan Bahadur CHOWDHRY WAJID HUSSAIN SAHEB, M.L.C., Director of Industries, United Provinces, dated the 4th December 1927.**

### INTRODUCTORY.

#### 1. No.

##### GENERAL.

2. (a) The number of Indians frequenting cinemas in these provinces are a very small fraction of the population as cinemas do not play the same part in the social life of the province as they do in European countries and even in places like Bombay and Calcutta. For instance in the city of Cawnpore with a population of over two lakhs, the number of Indians going to cinemas is on an average about 300 to 400 a day. The great majority of these are illiterate and half educated people. The attendance is not on the increase at least to any appreciable extent. Progress in the number of educated Indians frequenting cinemas is particularly slow.

(b) There are three kind of cinemas in Cawnpore which has four theatres:—(1) Two of them belong to Madan—the Elphinstone and the Empress. The audience in these theatres is mixed, *i.e.*, both European and Indian. The Indian audience consists of traders, shop-keepers, officials and a fair sprinkling of the gentry of the city. The bulk of European audience come from the Cantonments. In these two theatres practically all the films shown are imported ones. (2) Then there is the Empire Theatre which shows both imported and indigenous films. The audience is practically all Indian. (3) Thirdly the Zayon Cinema which only shows Indian films. The composition of the audience in this theatre is exclusively Indian. The great majority of visitors are half educated and uneducated men. The audience comprises shop-keepers, bankers mill-hands, low paid officials with a small sprinkling of pleaders and the gentry of the town.

(c) Not more than two or three per cent. are children under 14 years of age.

### PART I.

#### *Film Industry in India.*

3. *Puranic* films, *i.e.*, films showing scenes from the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabhart* and the American serials. Speaking broadly, the American serials appeal more to uneducated Indians and the *Puranic* to educated Indians. Fighting scenes appeal to the uneducated and half educated more than other films.

4. No; the most popular imported films which appeal to Europeans do not appeal to Indians. They are generally connected by a story and the continuity and culmination of scenes are not intelligible to an ordinary Indian spectator. The blood and thunder and the vulgarity appeal to the riff-rafs and uneducated but not to the cultivated audience. The Indian produced films cost the exhibitors more than the imported ones, and the indigenous industry is in a formative stage without adequate artistic and recreational standards. The Indian films are not sufficiently popular with the exhibitors and the visitors.

#### 5. No.

(a) No, the photography, the setting and the dramatic art are productions of inferior grade. It is only the subject matter which attracts the few men who are attracted.

(b) To a very limited extent.

(c) It is more profitable to show a Western than an Indian film. The following are instances of successful Indian films:—

Lanka Dahan.	Sulochana.
Kalia Mardan.	Sita Banwas.
Krishna Janana.	Simvhagarh.

6. (a) Yes, most decidedly.

(b) (1) To the educated classes, historical films;

(b) (2) To the illiterate population, epic films.

7. I am not in a position to say.

8. (a) No. There is no film manufacturing industry in these provinces. From the secondhand information I have about the industry in other provinces, it appears that the industry is not well organized either for production, distribution or for exhibition. Production is not satisfactory on account of want of capital, lack of facilities for the training of actors, and the undeveloped condition of the dramatic art. The films are aesthetically reprehensible. Distribution is unsatisfactory because difficulties are experienced in getting films on account of absence of distributing centres in the interior of the country. The producers are not in touch with theatrical companies and sufficient propaganda is not carried on on behalf of the eight or ten film producing companies that exist in the country. Exhibition is expensive. It costs twice as much to exhibit Indian made films as it does to exhibit imported ones. Prices of the former are fixed without due regard to their earning capacity in the market.

(b) The difficulties and drawbacks have been enumerated above. I would suggest the following means of assisting the industry:—

- (1) The establishment of a central government studio and a model manufacturing firm to be subsequently handed over to private enterprise. The staff should be European and Indian. The services of experienced men from America, Germany and England will have to be requisitioned partly because sufficient indigenous talent is not available at present and partly because in developing the social and educational possibilities of cinemas we have to steer between the two concepts of life—The Eastern and the Western—which go to extremes. If cinemas are to produce a healthy influence on society, the spiritual intuition of the East must be harnessed to the energy of the West. The Indian staff is also essential in order to maintain the Indian character of the films. Films illustrating national literature and folk stories are necessary. Europeans with business aptitude are also necessary to run the firm on strictly business lines.
- (2) The institution of research and instruction, at one or two technological Institutes, in the chemistry of photographic materials.
- (3) The maintenance of a central bureau of information which would aim at collecting and distributing literature in the form of magazines and papers and books devoted to the special interests of the industry, and maintain a list of candidates suitable for employment and consider applications for training in the studio and the firm. The bureau should also form a connecting link between the producer or importer on the one hand and the exhibitor on the other, and undertake the necessary propaganda on behalf of the former.
- (4) The grant of loans to manufacturing firms started on sound lines. This form of assistance should come in at a later stage when the Government firm has fully demonstrated the possibilities of the industry.
- (5) The imposition of a protective tariff.

9. No. Owing to the absence of distributing centres in the interior of the country, exhibitors in places like the United Provinces experience considerable difficulty in obtaining films at reasonable rates from Bombay and Calcutta. The income of exhibitors in less advanced provinces like the United Provinces is smaller than in provinces like Bombay and Bengal. But this fact is not considered by manufacturers in determining the rates payable by exhibitors in the interior of the country.

So far as I am aware, there is no monopoly or tendency to monopoly of the supply or exhibition of films.

10. I am not sufficiently acquainted with the working of the systems referred to in this question to express an opinion on their advantages and disadvantages. I understand that the Elphinstone and the Empress theatres belong to the well-known firm to Madan, who own about 50 to 60 theatres in the prominent cities of India and are in a position to obtain more favourable rates than the other two cinema companies in Cawnpore.

11. No. The exhibitors in the province have no facilities for previewing films. They have to get the films without seeing them. I have no suggestions to make in this matter.

12. There is no amusement tax in the United Provinces.

13. I am told that the exposed films are taxed *ad valorem* at the rate of 15 per cent. and their value is taken at the rate of -/4/- per foot. The negative films are taxed on the actual value which is much less. That gives a kind of protection to the indigenous industry. It would help the development of indigenous industry if the import duty on machinery is removed. The photographic materials are not very costly, but the continuance of a duty on such materials would help the manufacture of such chemicals as sodium hypo-phosphates though finer chemicals will have to be imported for sometime.

14. Most decidedly. There is no demand amongst the students or amongst their parents, but the demand will be created by the supply. In fact, I think cinemas should find a compulsory place in the educational curriculum in the department of Public Instruction. They will form a potent instrument in a work which otherwise consists, as Mr. E. Holmes put it, "of laying thin veneers of information on the surface of the mind of students". The education given in Indian schools fails to "foster growth" because it is a dry un-interesting task. It fails to develop instinctive propensities. The cinemas will not prove a mere pastime. They will provide food for the intellect and stimulate the imagination. They will provide both the nourishment and the exercise without which growth is impossible. Moreover the fund of general knowledge in the case of Indian students is so poor that it is necessary to supplement it, and one of the few effective means of supplementing it would be cinema shows which can combine what is pleasant with what is instructive. The ideas formed from a moving picture will make a more lasting impression than those from printed or oral description. Cinemas will also form a valuable aid to the dissemination of knowledge on agricultural and industrial matters.

15. Not in the United Provinces: there capital and enterprise both are lacking.

16. No, not at present, but the establishment of an organization like the one suggested in answer to question 8 will attract Indian talent and possibly Indian capital to the service of the industry.

17. Not in these provinces, but some moneyed people may, it is possible, be induced to take shares in a Government firm. For supplying the deficiency, please see answer to question 8 (a).

18. Yes. Please see answer to question 8 (a).

19. I am not in a position to say.

20. (a) and (b) Yes, I think Government should incur the expenditure involved. The production of films for educational purposes is, as I have said, not a luxury but an absolute necessity. No amount of expenditure on the production of educational films would therefore be unjustifiable. As a factory

for making educational films is urgently needed it would be economical to take up in this factory, the production of other films also.

21. Yes, I think the State should start an organization of this nature and when it has responded to the test of experiment and trial, it should be handed over to the private enterprise. Past experience shows that the industry needs state aid and guidance. Left to itself it is not likely to thrive, and it might, in the initial stages, go beyond the legitimate appeal to intelligence. It might exploit the crudest instincts, as profit lies in exploiting them.

22. (a), (b) and (c) In the present undeveloped state of the indigenous industry when the difference, both in quality and price, between the indigenous films and imported films is considerable, I am not sure if Imperial preference would help the Indian film industry. But if it is vitalized and is in a position to compete with foreign films with the help of a protective tariff, it will benefit by preference. The reason is that American films are more attractive to at least a certain class of audience and this factor coupled with their relative cheapness, will make competition with America and Germany severer than competition with England. Participation in the policy outlined by the Imperial Conference would therefore benefit the Indian industry and would be desirable from that point of view. Such participation might help in India's making her life and customs better known provided the artistic and recreational possibilities of the indigenous industry are sufficiently developed. Whether it will help in making India better understood, I am unable to say. American films being cruder than English films, the replacement of the former by the latter would be socially advantageous.

23. I am unable to suggest a practicable and effective scheme, but the organization outlined in the answer to question 8 will be useful in popularizing films, illustrative of the social and economic life of other component parts of the Empire.

## PART II.

### *Social aspects and control.*

24. (a) Yes, dramas of passion, suggestive scenes of immorality, impropriety in dress and conduct and anything that stirs up the sexual feeling.

(b) I am unable to say.

(c) The following class of films would be harmful:—

(i) Films of the nature indicated in (a). These would be harmful to youths and children.

(ii) References to controversial politics or facts of history.

(iii) Scenes tending to disparage any particular community or creed or important men (living or dead) of any creed or community.

(iv) Irreverent treatment of sacred subjects.

(ii to iv would be harmful to everybody).

(d) No.

(e) I am unable to say.

25. Most decidedly.

26. (a) Yes.

(b) I can't give titles of the films but I know films have wounded such susceptibilities.

27. (a) Films of the class enumerated in reply to question 24 (a) have a tendency to misrepresent western civilization. It is a fact that films representing western life are generally quite unintelligible to an uneducated Indian and are often misunderstood not only by uneducated, but also by half educated and intelligent Indians. The result is that they form wrong ideas about the social life and morality of the West. The only remedy I can suggest is an effective censorship.

27. (b) I am not aware.

28. Please see my answer to question 24 (a).

29. No, the proposal is not a practicable one.

I think the provision of special performances for children and boys is a good solution. The reasons for not allowing young men of impressionable age to go to cinemas are obvious. While scenes in cinemas may produce ideals of good, they may produce ideals of evil. They may generate feelings of sublimity but may also generate base and coarse things of the world. It is not good for them to grow, in the plastic days of youth when they are unable to discriminate between what is lofty and what is tainted with evil, with wrong ideas, and by association with such ideas devote their lives to contemplation of evil. I would suggest that not only children but also boys under 18 should be prohibited from going to cinemas except for special boys performances. It is quite possible to make cinemas attractive to boys and children without exhibiting love stories. They find films like those of Charlie Chaplin and anything dealing with rough and tumble jokes quite entertaining.

31. Censoring is not always an effective method of guarding against misuse of the film but it is probably the only method.

32. No. So far I know the practice is for the proprietors of theatres to send to the Superintendent of Police a list of the films which they propose to show, but except from his personal knowledge of the titles of the films, the Superintendent of Police has no means of ascertaining whether they are objectionable other than proceeding to the exhibition himself. A list of prohibited films is received and kept in the police office. In my opinion, the arrangement for the inspection of films is much too lax and is altogether unsatisfactory and I do not think there are adequate safeguards for preventing the exhibition of a film which may be legally objectionable. I regret, I cannot put in particular instances though I am informed that films were exhibited at fairs and *melas* which were distinctly open to objection. As far as I know in such fairs and *melas* nobody cares to look into the question at all. I think, proprietors of firms should be required to send not only lists but also descriptions of new films to the Superintendent of Police and no films should be exhibited before the sanction of the Superintendent of Police to its being exhibited has been received. Police officers will of course have to see that there is no delay in censoring films.

33. (a), (b), (c) Not to any appreciable extent.

34. (a), (b) I would advocate a Central Board in addition to provincial boards, and there should be a board of censors in every province.

(c) Provincial boards should have full powers in their respective boards. The Central Board should collect information regarding films and the effect they produced in parts of the country, and should pass on information to Provincial Boards with its own recommendations; but Provincial Boards should be at liberty to follow or not to follow the advice given by the Central Board. A wise provincial board would of course follow the advice.

34. (d) By the imposition of an entertainment tax.

35. (a) I have no personal experience of a Provincial Board.

(b) Yes.

36. (a) I have no personal knowledge of the system.

(b) If the censor or executive officer of the board is given emergency powers, it should not be necessary for members of the board to meet too frequently. If they are not required to meet frequently, gentlemen of standing would be available to take up the work.

37. I cannot get hold of a copy of the Act at the short notice given to me for appearing before the committee and am unable to express an opinion.

38. I have heard of such cases.

39. No.

40. Hardly necessary if the films are censored.

41. I am unable to answer this question.

42. The trade should not be associated with the work of censorship.

43. I do not possess sufficient knowledge of the export and import of films.

44. I cannot think of any means by which the help of the press and public bodies could be enlisted in maintaining a good standard of films. It is understood that the advisory bodies would have on them a sufficient number of the representatives of the people.

45 (a) If films are censored before they are exhibited, I do not see the necessity for control over film production, provided a lead is given in the production of attractive and un-objectable films by Government: as suggested above. Private firms will endeavour to come up to standard of the Government firms.

(b) They might be licensed and registered with the object of preventing the starting of firms by men who are not competent to do so; but their studios need not be periodically inspected.

*N.B.*—I wish to make it clear that the views expressed in this statement are mine and not those of the Government under whom I am employed.

**Oral Evidence of Khan Bahadur CHOWDHURI WAJID HUSAIN SAHEB, M.L.C., Director of Industries, United Provinces, on Monday, the 5th December 1927.**

*To Chairman :* I am the Director of Industries. I have been so for five years. My total service is about 24 years. My headquarters is Cawnpore.

*Chairman :* You know Cawnpore very well?

*A.* Fairly well. I would not say I know enough about the cinematograph in Cawnpore.

*Q.* Can you tell me how many cinemas you have got in the province?

*A.* I could not give you the total number of cinemas in the province, but I found cinemas in almost every big town that I visited in my tours.

*Q.* Let us say, Allahabad.

*A.* They have 2, 3 or 4 cinemas in places like Bareilly, Moradabad, Benares—I found cinemas in all big places, and more than one in several places.

*Mr. Green :* What exactly do you mean by a big town? What amount of population?

*A.* I mean most of the divisional headquarters.

*Q.* Well, with a population of 50,000?

*A.* More than 50,000 in several cases.

*Q.* What is the smallest town that would have a cinema?

*A.* I think I have seen cinemas in towns with a population of 50,000.

*Chairman :* Even less?

*A.* I could not say exactly.

*Q.* What is the population of Bareilly?

*A.* I could not tell you. It should be certainly more than 50,000.

*Q.* Is Moradabad a very big place?

*A.* It is a fairly big place.

*Q.* There are 4 cinemas in Cawnpore?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* And there is one which shows only Indian films?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* I suppose that is in the Indian quarters?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* And the other three?

A. Two belong to Madans.

Q. Do they show any Indian films at all?

A. Very seldom.

Q. And the Empire—they show both imported and Indian films?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you know where they get their Indian films?

A. There is a place in Bombay; I forget the name.

Q. They get them from the Bombay Presidency mostly?

A. Almost entirely, the indigenous films, yes.

Q. Had you at any time any film producing industry in your province?

A. No.

Q. But in these other theatres which show both imported films and Indian films, how often are Indian films shown?

A. Well, it is very difficult to say because I am not a frequent visitor.

Q. So far as you know, are Indian films popular?

A. They are popular on account of their subject-matter.

Q. It is easier understood by the people?

A. Exactly.

Q. And they follow it much more easily than Western films?

A. Yes.

Q. In the case of Western films, action films appeal more than serials?

A. Serials and films dealing with Indian life—of imported films those dealing with blood and thunder stories appeal more than others.

Q. They are able to follow them more easily?

A. Anything in the nature of a connected story in an imported film they find very difficult to understand.

Q. In the two theatres which show almost entirely Western films the audience is mostly European?

A. No, I wouldn't say that. As a matter of fact I had a talk with the manager of the Elphinstone the other day and he said his audience mostly comprised Indian visitors.

Q. Probably the educated classes?

A. Well, the well-to-do people of the town.

Q. What are the prices of the seats? Can you tell us what is the lowest charge?

A. 4 annas.

Q. In the city also?

A. Yes.

Q. And the highest?

A. Rs. 3.

Q. So it ranges from 4 annas to Rs. 3?

A. Yes, I think so.

Q. And have they got weekly programmes or bi-weekly programmes?

A. I could not tell you.

Q. And all 4 cinemas are generally well attended?

A. I would not say that, because, as I say in my statement, considering the population of Cawnpore—about 2 lakhs—the average number of people attending the cinemas is on an average 3 to 4 hundred a day.

Mr. Green : For each performance? I am not quite clear whether it is per day or per performance?

A. The daily average.

Chairman : In each of these it is from 300 to 400.



4. No, in all taken together.

Q. I suppose you have got a large labouring population, do they go?

A. They go but they are a very small fraction of the audience.

Q. They don't care much about it?

A. No.

Q. Is it because they find it costly?

A. I enquired into the matter and I found the real reason is that the urban population of Cawnpore and other places in the United Provinces are poorer as a rule than the urban population of places like Bombay. I am speaking of the lower classes, the workman class and so forth—they are poorer, their earnings are smaller.

Q. You say here American serials appeal more to uneducated Indians. I thought you said they don't follow it. What do you mean by serials?

A. Of the connected stories shown, those which are popular are so not because they are serials because they contain a lot of stirring matter.

Q. Of course all these religious or mythological films appeal to educated and uneducated Indians alike?

A. Most decidedly.

Q. What do you think of the technique of the Indian film as compared with the Western film?

A. Oh, it is very poor. I think the dramatic art is very inadequately developed, the setting is bad.

Q. And the photography and the lighting.

A. Every thing is very poor.

Q. And notwithstanding these defects they are getting popular?

A. Undoubtedly.

Q. That shows there is a demand for Indian films.

A. There is a demand, but it does not pay the exhibitor to exhibit Indian films because, as I say in my statement, it costs twice as much to exhibit an Indian film as it does to exhibit an imported film.

Q. Probably you will be interested to hear that we heard the other day in another province that in order to exhibit an Indian film you don't require costly music etc., so it is cheaper to exhibit an Indian film in Bombay and in the Punjab, whereas Western films require costly musicians and other accompaniments. But in your province you think the Indian film is more costly?

A. Well, in Cawnpore I know it costs them about Rs. 50 a night.

Q. Are they rented on a percentage basis or on a hire system?

A. What the arrangement is I don't know but they tell me they have to pay Rs. 50 and they have lighting and other charges to meet. That means they have to spend Rs. 100 a day and the earnings may not often come to very much more than Rs. 50. On the other hand, the imported film costs Rs. 22 a night.

Mr. Green: Are they new films or films shown at fifty other places in India?

A. I daresay they have been shown in other places. That is the account given to me by a proprietor of an Indian theatre; he told me they had to pay Rs. 22 a night.

Q. So they have to pay more for the Indian film than for the imported film?

A. That was the statement of an exhibitor of Indian films.

Q. You need not take it as necessarily absolutely correct?

A. No.

Sir Haroon Jaffer: Do they make any films in the United Provinces.

A. No.

Q. Nowhere?

A. I got a few lantern slides made for my department for demonstrating improved methods in certain industries.

*Chairman* : I am coming to that. Now did you make enquiry as to the respective cost before you came here of the exhibitors for this purpose, on account of our questionnaire?

A. Yes.

Q. That is the information you had from the exhibitors?

A. From one of the exhibitors.

Q. You think the demand for Indian films is greater than the supply?

A. Yes, certainly.

Q. Do you know whether exhibitors find any difficulty in getting imported films?

A. Well, a gentleman whom I met referred to one difficulty. What he said was that these people in Bombay ought to charge according to the earning capacity of the films at outlying places. They don't do that at present.

Q. That is to say, it is not on a percentage basis. If it were on a percentage basis they would not complain?

A. Exactly.

Q. The U. P. being so far away from seaport towns and distributing centres they find it difficult; I suppose that is the reason?

A. Then I was also told there were no proper distributing centres and the proprietor suggested that one means of getting out of the difficulty would be to establish more of what he called distributing centres.

Q. You have not seen any studios, I suppose?

A. No.

Q. Of course you are for familiarising people with modern methods and machinery, improved agricultural methods and also other educational purposes by using the film very largely?

A. Yes.

Q. And you think the Government should undertake that job?

A. Yes. And if they undertake that job it will be more economical if they undertake the production of recreational films also.

Q. But don't you think that would be an interference with the trade?

A. Well, I think the trade needs a little guidance and assistance from Government.

Q. Guidance and assistance no doubt, but to undertake the production of entertainment films would be an interference with trade?

A. But after all it is the duty of Government to pioneer industries that have not been properly pioneered, and this is one of those industries which have not thrived.

*Mr. Green* : In this province?

A. Certainly in this province.

*Chairman* : In Bombay they are producing a lot. There are several studios there and they are trying to meet the demand. Their films go to the Punjab and Peshawar; here also you are getting Bombay films.

A. But we are very backward here and I don't think there is any chance of private enterprise taking it up.

Q. In your province, but, after all, having regard to the demands of other industries in the country, do you think that the entertainment film industry is such that public money should be spent on it?

A. Well that is where I differ. I don't think it is a mere luxury. It is a necessity to a certain extent. Even recreation is a necessity. You want to give people something to amuse themselves with when they have nothing to do.

Q. To pursue that, what is your idea—that Government should produce both educational and public utility films and also in addition produce entertainment films?

A. Films illustrative of the literature and the history of the province.

**Q.** That would be instructional; more or less you would confine it to instructional purposes. You don't want them to produce social drama and all that?

**A.** Possibly that would be exceeding the limits of Government action.

**Q.** Now do you think there is any chance of your province going in for this film industry?

**A.** Not without State aid; there is not the slightest chance.

**Q.** Do you think with State aid it is likely to come off?

**A.** Quite possibly because capital is very shy and there is very little private enterprise. If Government were to start a factory it is quite possible the public might take shares.

**Q.** You mean Government will have a good factory in which they will have experts whose assistance may be indented upon by private producers?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** And your idea is that there should be loans on easy terms for producers because you consider that even the production of amusement films is a necessity for the poorer people? You advocate this?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Now as regards these instructional and educational films, do you think each Government should produce its own films or do you think there should be a central organisation for all Governments?

**A.** I am against anything which conflicts with the idea of provincial autonomy, which is the ultimate aim, and for that reason I would not favour a central organisation unless it is purely of an advisory character.

**Q.** And probably of a distributing character?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** I see from your note that you advocate a central library where the central authority may co-ordinate the function of distributing to the various provinces; but you want production to be in the hands of each province?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** But don't you think in this way the same sort of work will be reduplicated. Take public health, sanitary living and so on, don't you think the work will be reduplicated; whereas a central studio will be able to produce much more effectively, and at less cost perhaps, all the Provincial Governments having a voice in the matter of course but the object is that all the provinces may pool their resources?

**A.** I think my remarks have caused some confusion. I have advocated decentralization in censorship.

**Q.** You do advocate the establishment of a central studio and a model manufacturing firm to be subsequently handed over to private enterprise?

**A.** Well, this need not be necessarily provincial. What I have insisted upon being provincial is the Advisory Board of Censorship.

**Q.** That is a different matter.

**A.** I think it would be a great waste of money if each provincial Government were to start its own studio.

**Q.** Of course there is this point to be kept in view, namely, there may be local conditions which will have to be reproduced. A central studio does not necessarily mean that it cannot go to the spot and take photographs in each province if the province so desires.

**A.** Exactly.

**Q.** Now there is one other aspect of the question which I would ask your opinion about. It has been stated that each province prefers its own surroundings, its own modes of dress, its own methods of cultivation and other things rather than, say, Madras peasants being shown in the U. P. which may not appeal so much as a U. P. peasant shown on the screen. Do you find any such difficulty in Indian films now being shown? Do the people appreciate the Bombay films?

A. One of the striking features of the indigenous film is that they disclose a great deal of anachronism and a great many absurdities; but I have never heard it complained of that provincialities were not attended to. I don't think a central organisation will be incapable of reproducing provincial features wherever necessary.

Q. In some cases it may not be necessary to reproduce provincial differences. So on the whole your considered opinion is that in view of the cost and more efficient working a central studio will be more advantageous?

A. Yes.

Q. Where all the Governments can join hands?

A. Yes.

Q. And do you think there is any chance of educated Indians taking to acting for the films?

A. Yes, if the profession is made sufficiently attractive.

Q. And in the central studio, you would have expert trainers, directors and scenario writers whose services could be indented on to educate Indian youths in that direction?

A. Yes.

Q. If you had a vocational class of that kind attached to a college, do you think youths there would care to attend?

A. I think they would be rather keen on it because in various institutions in my own department they have started dramatic clubs. I think they will be quite keen and are only waiting for the opportunity.

Q. How about girls? Do you have any girls in your colleges?

A. I am afraid we are more backward in that respect than any other part of the country.

Q. But we heard of a Ladies Society at Allahabad.

A. Well Kashmiri Brahmins are very advanced in that direction.

Q. Do you think they will take to film acting?

A. I cannot say definitely but, most probably not, because that is in a way against the deep-rooted instincts of Indian ladies. Never mind how advanced an Indian lady may be there are certain things which she will always be slow to take up.

Q. I suppose you know that Parsi ladies and Bengali lady amateurs do it in the theatre?

A. But to a very limited extent, I presume.

Q. They have now taken to film acting. Also you know "The Light of Asia" was produced with the help of amateurs. I don't know, but probably in your province purdah is more observed.

A. It is.

Q. What are the terms on which you grant loans in this province to industries?

A. At 7 per cent.

Q. And what is the time for repayment?

A. Generally up to 10 years.

Q. You advance loans for industrial purposes? Have you got an Industrial Loans Act?

A. We have no Industrial Loans Act but we have an organisation called the Board of Loans Commissioners who consider applications and make recommendations.

Q. Both for Agriculture and Industry.

A. Yes.

Q. And do you think those terms are sufficiently liberal?

A. No.

Q. You would extend the time and reduce the rate of interest?

A. I would not necessarily reduce the period. I think 10 years is a sufficiently long period. In the case of the cinema industry a longer period may be necessary but so far no complaint has come to my notice that the period is not sufficiently long.

Q. It is working satisfactorily, your loans system?

A. I am afraid we have done very little in that way. Very few loans have been given, and very few people ask for loans.

Q. Why is that? Have you no cottage industries?

A. Well, they say the rate of interest is very high and if they have got sufficient security they can get banks to advance.

Q. Have you got any Indian banks which give loans?

A. Yes.

Q. You believe in a protective tariff to encourage the growth of industries.

A. Very strongly.

Q. Of course it should not be too high?

A. That is a matter of detail.

Q. Now you know the present tariff is 15 per cent. on imported films; and you also advocate, I see, that machinery connected with it and raw films should be imported free.

A. Yes.

Q. Do you think 15 per cent. is not sufficiently high?

A. I would not like to express an opinion about it.

Q. I want to know about your distributing centre. What do you want? Why should not somebody take it up as a trade proposition?

A. Well, the whole thing is so ill organised; exhibitors cannot get films at what they call reasonable rates.

Q. You are the second person whom I have come across who approves of the suggestion contained in our question No. 21, namely, of a Government monopoly in production and distribution.

A. Well, I am of course speaking from my knowledge of the conditions in these provinces. I certainly think that from the aesthetic point of view, from the point of view of dramatic art, the industry cannot be properly pushed without State aid.

Q. That is another question. But a monopoly in the hands of Government, would that not interfere with the development of art and also with the development of trade? What sort of Government monopoly? Aiding is one thing.

A. Not a monopoly. I do not think I advocated a monopoly. What I have advocated is that Government should start a sort of model firm and hand it over to private enterprise. I certainly would not be in favour of a monopoly.

Q. And as regards distribution I don't see what the Government can do. It is more or less importing films and distributing them or buying films or undertaking the distribution for a commission and all that—that should be left more to private effort rather than to Government effort.

A. My opinion is that in the earlier stages a good deal of work, which later on can be done by private enterprise, can be very usefully done by Government, regard being had to the undeveloped and unorganised state of the industry in this province.

Q. Why is private trade not capable of doing it?

A. We are very slow in this matter. We are a very backward province in all matters of this kind.

Q. And still you say you have a large number of cinemas exhibiting films. Do they complain that they find it difficult to get films?

A. The difficulty is what I have said.

Q. Is it because they get the films last?

A. Whatever be the reason, they are not satisfied with the existing arrangements.

Q. So you think the existing arrangements are not satisfactory for distribution. Anyway, some of them will probably appear before us and be able to tell us more definitely what their difficulties are. I see you have explained your position as regards the policy of Imperial Preference. You think it is doubtful whether it will help the Indian film industry at all.

A. My point is: it is so undeveloped. I am for preference but not under the present conditions. Nothing in the world would help the industry. It is only when it is in a more developed form that such an arrangement would help. That again is based on my knowledge of the United Provinces. I understand from you that the industry is in a better position in other provinces.

Q. Of course when Indian films can compete with foreign films then, as you point out, it will benefit by preference.

A. Yes. The position here is similar to that in other industries. Take for instance engineering goods. Indian products have to face fiercer competition from Continental countries than from England; on account of their high price English goods will never be brought into severe competition with Indian goods. It is the competition with Continental goods which are cheaper that is severe. In the same way the Indian films will not be brought into competition with English films for some time to come, but it is quite possible that when the industry is more developed they may be brought into competition with American and other films.

Q. In your statement you say foreign films are more costly. "Foreign" films mostly are now American?

A. Yes.

Q. And they are less costly than the Indian films. Therefore the Indian films have to compete with cheap foreign films.

A. Well, at present there is practically no competition between Indian films and the foreign ones because there is such a large difference in the quality and the price. My point is: as things are, the question of competition between Indian films and foreign films does not arise.

Q. Why do you say that?

A. If Indian films are patronised more and if their standard also is improved, then competition will begin, and it will be fiercer with the products of countries outside the Empire. That is how protection will help the indigenous industry.

Q. How do you think Imperial Preference is going to help the Indian industry if you prefer Empire goods to foreign goods?

A. I gave you an instance of engineering goods and other things. British manufactures are very expensive and in regard to quality, it is very difficult for India to come up to their standard, at any rate for some time to come.

Q. Of course, it is freely admitted that English films are inferior to American films and that American films are cheaper?

A. But the point is, British films are more expensive than the American films. Another thing is, American films are more attractive, and therefore the competition will really lie between Indian films and American films, and protection will certainly help. That is my argument.

Q. If you make it more difficult to get the American films it will be a great danger to Indian producers because they are just learning the art.

A. There are advantages and disadvantages. I think that some of the American films, at any rate, are very crude, and I would not have them at any cost.

Q. What do you mean by crude? Do you mean they are suggestive?

A. They stir up the sexual feeling.

**Q.** I can understand your argument for stricter censorship, but this is a point for definite action on the part of the Indian Government of preferring among foreign films one class of films to the other?

**A.** I am looking at it from the economic point of view, and I think it will certainly benefit the Indian industry.

**Q.** Till Indian films are more firmly established on their own merits, any foreign film is a rival, whether British or otherwise?

**A.** The goal is that we should be able to raise our indigenous industry to such an extent that it might be possible to use Indian films quite freely. It is very difficult in any country to completely exclude foreign films.

**Q.** Therefore the idea in England is to introduce the quota system in order to encourage the growth of British Empire films, i.e., to enforce the exhibition of British Empire films, which means practically, so far as England is concerned now, most English films. So what do you think of adopting the quota system for Indian films in our country, i.e., every exhibitor should be compelled to exhibit a certain percentage of Indian films in a week or month in each theatre, and the percentage to grow gradually?

**A.** I am all for it. I also think that from the educational point of view we stand to gain by any arrangement which will result in an increased exhibition of Indian films illustrative of our literature, philosophy and civilization.

**Q.** Now, you think that there are certain films which you would not pass if you were a member of the Board of Censors? That is, I take it, you want stricter censorship?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** You mean in respect of passionate love scenes, crimes and so forth?

**A.** I don't think that crime films would necessarily increase the number of thefts and other crimes; but these passionate love scenes in the films do have a deleterious effect on the minds of our youth, and I think that in the interest of the youth of our country there should be stricter censorship.

**Q.** Not because they misrepresent western people?

**A.** Partly for that reason also, because if our young men form a bad impression about western civilization, it would certainly be bad for them.

**Q.** You mean on their mutual relations as fellow citizens?

**A.** I am not thinking of a better understanding between the two countries. I am speaking of the influence which wrong ideas of western civilization are likely to create in the minds of our youths. To create in the minds of our boys the idea that a highly advanced country should have customs which they regard as objectionable would certainly produce a bad effect on them.

**Q.** What is the impression they form from seeing westerners as they actually live here, in their dancing halls and other places? What impression do they form about them?

**A.** I don't think those things have a bad influence.

**Q.** You think there is exaggeration of the westerner's life in the films shown here?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** And that ought to be censored?

**A.** Yes, and I would certainly advocate stricter censorship in that direction.

**Q.** Have you been to Europe?

**A.** No. I have never been outside the U. P. except to Simla, Delhi and Calcutta.

**Q.** Do you think that boys below 18 years should be prohibited from seeing certain films?

**A.** I won't say that they should be prohibited. I have already advocated the idea of holding special performances for them, and if the standard of the films is raised, perhaps the necessity for prohibiting the children from seeing certain films would not arise.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer :* Don't you think that if the import duty on foreign films is raised, it would penalise the Indian audience without giving any benefit to the Indian industry?

A. I don't think it will penalise them.

Q. You think that even if you raise the tariff, the theatres will still draw large crowds and it won't penalise the industry?

A. No, I don't think so.

Q. You mean the extra money that will be paid by the cinema people will be recovered by them from the audience?

A. After all, you have to consider who are the people who go to the cinemas. Then again you cannot separate the two things. If you put a high tariff on imported films, it is also part of your scheme that the indigenous industry should be developed. I don't think it matters very much to a man with an income of, say, Rs. 500 or Rs. 1,000 to pay Rs. 3 or Rs. 3-8-0 for his admission ticket. Cinemas are not an entertainment of such absorbing character in the country that an increase of duty, say, by 15 or 25 per cent, or even a little more would make any appreciable difference to the pockets of the people who visit the cinema theatres.

Q. Is it a fact that Mussulmans are prohibited by their religion from attending the cinemas? Is there any such thing in the U. P.?

A. I have not heard.

Q. We had a gentleman at Karachi who would not even come forward and give his evidence on the ground that it is against his religion. Is there any such feeling in the U. P.?

A. No.

*Mr. Green :* I gathered from what you said that the majority of the people in Cawnpore who pay 4 annas to go to the cinemas are fairly well-to-do people?

A. Did I say that? I don't think I did.

Q. Could you tell me what class does the 4 anna crowd represent?

A. The 4 anna class chiefly represents the mill workmen and labourers and others.

Q. Do you get any cultivators or ryots?

A. No, none at all.

Q. Could you say that holds true of the province generally?

A. My impression is that the cinema has not appealed to the rural population.

Q. And I think the reason of it is that only a town of a certain size can afford to run a cinema?

A. I remember that during the war, in 1915 or 1916, I arranged a show and I got a large number of people from the villages. It was, of course, a free show, and it was intended mainly for school boys. But the parents came with the boys and sought admission to the lantern show. But then those were the days when the cinema was a novelty.

Q. The Chairman asked you some questions about a central studio, and you said that Government might start one but that you did not want that to be perpetuated?

A. My point is, that Government should start a central organization and hand it over ultimately to private enterprise.

Q. Then you want stricter censorship of sex films. Can you indicate to us how far you want the censor to go? Is the censor for example to cut out every scene of a western film where there is kissing or courting?

A. He should cut out anything that is likely to stir up the sexual feeling.

Q. In the west you know that kissing is not regarded in that light?

A. But it ought to be prohibited in India.

*Colonel Crauford :* I notice you say, Mr. Wajid Hussain, that, so far as you are aware, the attendance at the cinemas is not on the increase. I suppose



you are speaking of the Cawnpore cinemas? You have not been able to tell us anything about the rest of the province.

A. I referred only to Cawnpore.

Q. Because elsewhere we found from a study of the box office receipts of the cinemas that there is a definite increase in attendance. I wonder if you could get us figures and send them to us?

A. Most certainly, but I fear I shall not be able to collect them and supply them to you during your short stay here, but I shall be most happy to send them to you, say, in about a month's time.

Q. Do you think that if Indian vernacular captions were attached to western films, they would be more readily understood by the Indian audiences?

A. I don't think that that alone would help them. They have to know the whole story before they can appreciate the film.

Q. That is how you develop the cinema habit?

A. At any rate, English films do not appeal to Indian audiences. Let us take two films, one an Indian and the other English. Both are understood, but an Indian film would be better understood by the Indian audience than an English film.

Q. For instance, take a Douglas Fairbanks film and an Indian film?

A. A really good Indian film need not fear competition from any English or American film, however attractive it may be.

Q. I am alluding to a particular class of English films which, I understand, appeal to Indian audiences.

A. But the English film that would really appeal to an Indian audience in preference to an Indian film has yet to be produced. Even if you raise the standard of Indian films to a very high state of perfection, they cannot possibly appeal to English audiences to the same extent as the English films would.

Q. That all depends upon the entertainment value of the films!

A. If one has to choose between two films of equal merit, I certainly think the Indian film would appeal to Indian audiences better, I mean the emotions, the feelings and the associations.

Q. I think you mentioned to the Chairman that you had produced a certain number of films or that the Local Government had produced some films?

A. Yes, in my department we have produced a few, but they are not worth mentioning. I think we produced about a dozen slides.

Q. Could you give us the cost of production of those films?

A. Not offhand.

Chairman : Who produced them?

A. We got them made through our experts. I will send you a full statement showing the cost of production of films also figures relating to attendance at Cawnpore theatres, but as I said, it will take at least a month to collect figures for the whole province.

Q. It is enough if you give us figures for the last three years?

A. I will do so.

Col. Crawford : I believe you have no entertainment tax in your province?

A. No.

Chairman : Could you send us the statement in about a fortnight's time?

A. Yes, I will try.

Mr. Neogy : You said that you received orders very recently to appear before this Committee. Was it from the Minister for Industries?

A. From Government. I had an informal warning about it on or about the 28th of last month. That was the earliest information I had about this Committee, and since then I have been visiting the cinemas and collecting information.

Q. Did the Government as a whole consider this question?

A. I have pointed out in my statement that the views I represent are wholly mine, and not of the Government. The reason why I am here is this. The Government wanted some one from among the officials to appear before the Committee, and as you were doing us the honour of paying a visit to this province, my Government thought that somebody should appear before you, and I was selected.

Q. You are in favour of Government pioneering industries? Have your Government taken up pioneering work?

A. Yes, we started a soda factory some time ago. We have also given money for starting a factory for making tinctures.

Q. And these have been given over to private enterprise?

A. I will give you an instance of what our Government have done in the matter. Take the turpentine factory and the bobbin Co. These were started by Government and were subsequently handed over to private enterprise. Government spent huge sums on these factories, and one of them is very successful.

Q. So long as these business concerns were under Government management, I suppose they were run purely on business principles?

A. An attempt was made to run them on business lines.

Q. Supposing you start a pioneering industry in a particular line and there is also a private agency turning out the very same kind of thing which you propose to turn out, could not the private owner complain that the Government are not taking into consideration all the factors relating to the cost of things etc. and Government being in a more favourable position to compete with private enterprise, that it would amount to unfair competition?

A. The question is whether the factories started by private enterprise are able to produce films of the requisite standard. That is a matter of opinion. If private enterprise is able to produce films of the requisite standard from the artistic and other points of view, then there is no justification for State intervention at all. But if private enterprise is not able to produce films of the required standard and is not able to meet the demand in the country, then certainly the State should intervene.

Q. Private enterprise is already able to produce satisfactory films, and they are quite popular with the Indian audiences, and the producers are also getting good dividends. In those circumstances is there any justification for Government to intervene?

A. That is a matter that requires investigation. The films should be of a particular quality and standard. Government will also have to show how the film industry can be taken up as a good business proposition. If private enterprise is able to produce films of the required standard and meet the demand in the country, then certainly the State need not intervene.

Q. The chief difficulty which the private enterprise is faced with is about finance?

A. That again is a matter of opinion.

Q. The development of industries is a provincial subject. How would you advocate a Central Government organization taking up this pioneering work?

A. It is quite possible to have a central organization which may not interfere with the powers of provinces, provided you have a good representation of provinces on the central organization. It is a matter for mutual agreement. Take the School at Dhanbad, the School of Mines, which is an All India institution. For the sake of avoiding duplication of work, you may start a central organization for all the provinces of India and you can also so arrange that all the provinces will have a share in its control.

Q. They will have to contribute towards the capital?

A. That is a matter of detail.

Q. It should be a sort of joint stock effort on behalf of all the provinces?

A. You can call it by whatever name you like, the idea is there.

**Q.** Suppose there are private parties who are producing films. Will they be entrusted with whatever work that Government may want to produce in the province? If you want a film for any department could you not entrust that work to the private agency if you had one in the province itself, provided you were assured of its capacity?

**A.** Most certainly I am for entrusting the work to private agencies, if they can do it efficiently.

**Q.** You perhaps do not know what the producers have done in the Bombay Presidency? You are perhaps only speaking of your experience in the United provinces?

**A.** I know that some Bombay people produce good films.

**Q.** If there are capable business men already in the field who have successfully manufactured films for other provincial Governments like propaganda films and so forth, you would not object to Government work being entrusted to them?

**A.** I have already made it clear that I am all for private enterprise, and I am not for Government undertaking anything of this sort if there are capable private people who can do work for Government.

**Q.** You think then that Government work might be entrusted to private agencies?

**A.** Why not?

**Q.** Quite right. Then even Government work might be entrusted to such private agency?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** I have got your meaning quite clear now. Then with regard to Empire films, I don't yet understand how discrimination in favour of Empire films can be of any assistance to the Indian industry. Let us take a concrete case: the discrimination may be in regard to the customs duty. For instance, you can charge less customs duty in the case of the British Empire films, 15 per cent. being the duty all round. Now, if you were to have a lesser rate fixed for the Empire film, then to that extent the Empire film would be cheaper, provided other things are equal, that is if their price and quality are equal to the price and quality of films coming from other parts of the world, for instance America. If these things are equal, then if you charge a lesser rate of customs duty on the Empire film, then to that extent British Empire films would be available at a cheaper rate in India, isn't that so?

**A.** I am afraid I don't quite follow.

**Q.** Let us assume that British Empire films are of the same quality and are of the same price as the American films. Then you charge 15 per cent. duty, which is the existing rate, on American films. You charge less, say 5 per cent. on the British films. Then to the extent of this difference of 10 per cent. the British films would be sold or hired out cheaper in India.

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** And to that extent they would be able to compete successfully with American films, isn't that so? But to the extent that the Indian films would be competing with foreign films, wouldn't the competition be keener as against British Empire films, which would come in at cheaper customs rates?

**A.** I am afraid I don't quite follow what you mean. I will read out to you what my answer is on that point. Question 22, isn't it? .

(Reads his answer)

That is what I mean. Have I made myself clear?

**Q.** You assume that the American films are more attractive and cheaper. But what I say is this, these are factors about which no one can be very definite. So I was assuming a case in which the American film would be equal to the British Empire film both in point of quality and in price.

**A.** You mean the American film will go down in attractiveness?

**Q.** Well, the British Empire film will go up in attractiveness. Why do you think that the British Empire film is not capable of improvement?

**A.** I see, you are thinking of levelling up.

**Q.** Then in that case the Indian film would be faced with a keener competition because the British Empire films would be cheaper to the extent of the discrimination in the customs duty in their favour.

**A.** Well, that is a matter for the future.

**Q.** I mean to say we want to make a start and we want to give a push to the Indian industry.

**A.** Let us get that.

**Q.** Well, that is our main object. You and I agree on that. Now, on the point of misrepresentation of western civilisation, you have not been to the west?

**A.** I am afraid not.

**Q.** Do you think that what you call that misrepresentation has a demoralising effect on a man like you?

**A.** Well, it certainly may have on my children.

**Q.** So it is a question of age, experience and education?

**A.** What is it you are driving at?

**Q.** The question is, whether it is not possible by the very process of familiarising ourselves with these things to effectively counteract any risk of misrepresentation.

**Chairman :** Can you not educate the people to understand these things rightly?

**A.** It will take time to educate the people to such an extent. It is a slow process.

**Mr. Neogy :** But your idea is to shut out certain aspects of life altogether from our people.

**A.** Not exactly.

**Q.** You would even ban kissing altogether. You would shut out certain aspects of western civilisation or life generally.

**A.** You mean that everything that there is in the west is worth knowing and adopting.

**Q.** I don't say that, but every civilisation has its good and bad points. Why should western civilisation be depicted on the screen only in its favourable aspects?

**A.** You do not mean that everything that is good for grown up people is also good for young people?

**Q.** No. That brings me to an important point. It is a question of allowing or not allowing people under a certain age to see certain things. It boils down to that.

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Then, supposing we were to have special shows for children, or rather, shows from which children would be excluded, that would be a remedy?

**A.** Well, I have said that I am in favour of having special performances. But what I said in reply to a question by another gentleman was that I would prefer tightening the censorship because that would make it unnecessary to arrange special shows.

**Q.** But you want the censorship to be tightened to the extent of banning even kissing scenes. Do you think those pictures would have any attraction for Europeans?

**A.** Well, I am not concerned with what would or would not appeal to Europeans. I look at things from the point of view of Indians.

**Q.** Now looking at it from the point of view of the exhibitor, do you think it would be worth his while to exhibit these pictures?

A. Oh, I think it is quite possible for exhibitors to make cinemas attractive without exhibiting films which I wish to be excluded.

Q. But from your statement it seems that in Cawnpore even the present films are not attractive enough.

A. That doesn't prove your case, Sir.

Q. You admit there is some attraction in these scenes?

A. Oh, attraction there is. I don't deny that.

Q. Well, human nature being what it is, there is this attraction and even with all this attraction the cinema is not very popular, nor is it very paying—that is your experience. Now, you want to make it less attractive from that point of view. You want to pay a very high price then for developing the industry.

A. That is a matter of opinion.

Chairman: You take that risk in view of the larger welfare of the larger population.

Mr. Neogy: And you won't allow Europeans in India to see pictures that they would like to see?

A. Well, that is another point of view altogether. That certainly is a question to be considered: if you prohibit the importation of films, what will the Europeans have to say?

Col. Crawford: Have you any knowledge as to whether the Europeans like these films?

A. I couldn't tell you as to what they think about these films. I think certainly some Europeans don't care for them. A European friend of mine remarked the other day he would be very glad if some of the Yankee things were cut out.

Mr. Neogy: But they would not approve of your banning kissing altogether.

A. Naturally, when I speak of these things I speak more from the point of view of the Indian. There is no question of agreeing or not agreeing. I am not competent to speak about the sentiments of Europeans.

Chairman: Was that Yankee reference made out of love for British things?

A. Well, I don't know that. That is certainly the remark that was made.

Q. I know, but it may be due to that.

A. Well, my impression of some of the American films that are exhibited is that they ought not to be exhibited. That is the impression that some Europeans have too.

Mr. Neogy: Because films are almost exclusively American?

Chairman: Of course they have a natural desire to advance their own interests, just as we have.

Mr. Green: May I beg to remind the committee that certain English films have been banned in this country?

Mr. Neogy: Yes, even under the present standard of censorship which is not tight enough from your point of view.

Chairman: In Australia more English films are banned than American.

Sir Haroon Jaffer: Don't you think more pure and clean pictures, without this kissing or other things, would attract more parents of the boys and orthodox people to the cinemas?

A. Yes, but the fact is there: that there will be less attraction.

Q. But wouldn't that make up the deficiency or the loss which the exhibitor will suffer?

A. I don't know that it will exactly make up the deficiency.

Mr. Neogy: Now, what do you think of the present style of dress of European ladies? If you want to ban kissing would you ban certain kinds of dress which may be quite objectionable from the point of view of the Indians?

A. It is very difficult to say. Without a concrete instance it is very difficult to say what is and what is not objectionable.

*Chairman* : Probably you would ban some of the pictorial magazines from England, say " London Life."

A. That is very difficult to say.

**Oral Evidence of Mr. J. N. B. WETHERILL, Inspector of Schools,  
Oudh, on Monday, the 5th December 1927.**

*Witness* : May I remark that any answers I give you express my own opinion and not any official opinion. And may I remark, too, that, as far as the commercial side is concerned, I am practically ignorant, so I am chiefly concerned with the cinema as an instrument of education.

*Chairman* : I was going to trouble you about that only. You are the inspector of schools?

A. Yes.

Q. How long have you been inspector?

A. 11 years.

Q. Are you inspector of schools for a particular area?

A. At present I am inspector of schools for the whole of Oudh.

Q. And I suppose you tour about?

A. I tour continually. I am on tour at present.

Q. You have seen cinemas in Oudh and other places? What are the places in which you have got cinemas?

A. I would point out that I have chiefly been sent because I am interested in the progress of the cinema as an instrument of education.

Q. Very well. I thought if you knew it might be of use. You consider that the film is a very efficient method of supplementing the education given in schools.

A. I think it is an efficient method of supplementing education but I do not consider that it is a very efficient medium for educational work in the school itself.

Q. And do you consider it is a good method of enlightening the masses? Supposing you started a movement for mass education, apart from school education, for the illiterate people of the country. Would you consider it an effective method?

A. I do not think at the present stage that it would be a very effective method for the reason that, when I have seen illiterate people attending cinemas I have found that they have been more interested in the movement than in the actual matter of the cinema display and on trying to analyse this I find that they do not see the details of the picture. I have worked this with single slides in order to test it and have found that illiterate people, both in India and in other countries are not particularly clever at seeing a picture, that they do not understand perspective, and consequently they are chiefly attracted by the chief object in the picture. If they are asked afterwards what they saw in the picture they would probably say that they saw a man running, or a man walking. And if it should have happened to have been the use of an agricultural implement, they had not seen the process that it was desirable that they should see. This I have tested.

Q. You are referring to magic lantern slides.

A. I have used the magic lantern slides to test the effect of the cinema display.

Q. Even as regards the use of agricultural machinery you think they are not able to appreciate the points?

A. I don't think they are. But I don't say that they might not be if a good deal of money was spent or perhaps even wasted on educating them to seeing what is in a picture.

**Q.** You mean even if a travelling lecturer were to lecture to them in the vernacular and point to the screen explaining shortly what is being shown, you don't think that would be useful?

**A.** That is where I think the slide is superior to the film, because the picture is continually on the slide but the lecturer cannot keep pace with the film, taking into consideration the slow intellect of his audience.

**Q.** And you think so also as regards public health propaganda? Do you think that would have the same effect?

**A.** There is a little difference with regard to that. The representations are often, I believe, enlarged in that and there is slow movement introduced in order to show the actual definite insect or pest or whatever it may be, at work. And also I would point out, if I may expand on this, that of the films that I have seen at sources of production in England, those that dealt with hygiene were the best perhaps. I speak of one or two that I saw this year at the Institute at Kingston and the film that represented defilement by the fly, I think, would have been understood almost by any illiterate audience.

**Q.** Have you seen any of the educational films produced in Germany or America?

**A.** I saw some of them a few years ago.

**Q.** They have quite a varied lot—quite a large number connected with education, broadly speaking. Of course, adapted to local conditions you think they can be of use?

**A.** I think they can be of use, but at the same time the amount of money required to produce and then to launch these films so that they may be beneficial, seems to be out of proportion to the result that is obtained. And I am, as a schoolmaster of a good many years standing in England, averse from bringing too much of entertainment into actual teaching.

**Q.** Of course, that is why I said supplementing. But in the case of the large bulk of the population here who are illiterate, unfortunately, what other effective method is there of bringing knowledge to them?

**A.** Well, I hold—which of course has not much to do with the film—that the only way we can get at them is by an effective improvement of teaching and inspecting staffs. I do not mean by that staffs of inspectors who go to find fault but those who can go down into the districts and help the rather inefficient teacher who is there, because he has no other outlook as he has in other countries. It is the only way of bringing him into contact with what is going on outside.

**Q.** But you are thinking more of the children. I am thinking of the adults.

**A.** Well, in that way I think of the children first and the adults following. I would take the case of the London County Council. I have had a good deal to do with the teachers of London and recently I was addressing one of their conferences, and talking before the many women teachers whom I had known many years ago and they all spoke very highly of the effect of the teaching of hygiene upon the homes of parents during the last ten or twelve years. They thought—many of them—that more had been achieved outside the school than in the school.

**Q.** Perhaps you have the 'World Adult Education' movement in mind?

**A.** I am thinking of the work done by the children who had been taught in the schools, back in their homes. And if we could make child teaching more effective it would go back to the home as much here as anywhere else.

**Q.** Of course, you are speaking in your personal capacity—do you know if your Government had under consideration any proposal for mass education in the province?

**A.** You mean for adult education? There is the scheme for bringing co-operative societies into connection with adult classes.

**Q.** Have you got any system of night classes or continuation classes for labourers?

A. Sporadic.

Q. Are there any efforts being made by the Government?

A. Effort is being made but I cannot say that it has been a great success.

Col. Crawford: Have you any information as to the effect of the cinema to-day upon the youth of the province?

A. More by hearsay than in any other way; and my opinion at present is that it has not so far had any great effect on their habits. I have given a good deal of consideration to this matter—are you referring to the moral effect in regard to these sex and crime films?

Q. Well, I will take it on that later. I was just wondering if you had any reports at all as to whether the cinema was having any effect at all in any direction?

Chairman: I didn't ask him about that, Col. Crawford, because he preferred to base his evidence on the educational aspect.

A. Well, I didn't wish to limit myself not to talk on anything relating to sex and crime films. I am perfectly agreeable to answer.

Col. Crawford: I am taking the broad educational aspect of the film. I wonder whether you have noticed any effect at all, or heard of any effect?

A. I have heard town boys conversing a good deal about the films they had seen, and I have also heard reports—I take them with a grain of salt—that the film is having a bad effect. The statements seemed to me rather made *ex cathedra* and not to have any particular value. I tried to follow them up in one or two cases; the speaker had just spoken, that was all.

Q. Do you frequent the cinema very much yourself?

A. Less than a good many people, because I am inclined to think that it is not as artistic as other forms of drama. But I do go.

Q. What is your general opinion of the stories shown in the films?

A. I think they are the standard of Hollywood if that carries any weight.

Q. That carries enough!

Mr. Green: I was very interested in your remarks about the ability or lack of ability of uneducated people to grasp even simple pictures. You told us that you had experimented with magic lanterns. Do I understand that you also experimented with the cinema?

A. I experimented with the magic lantern particularly to test the cinema.

Q. But you have not actually tested the cinema?

A. I have asked the illiterates what they had seen on the cinema, and that roused me to test them with the picture.

Q. Those were presumably entertainment films?

A. No. The particular film I am thinking of was an agricultural film.

Q. And the people you asked presumably have not seen the cinema very frequently?

A. No.

Q. Don't you consider it possible that what is sometimes known as the cinema sense can grow even among the illiterates, that is to say, they get to understand.

A. I think so, but it requires great expense, because the illiterate person in some of the countries, here and in Russia, where I was years ago—the illiterate person is not so well acquainted with the ordinary picture. The crude picture appeals more than the photograph. I put it this way, that in books that I have written for very simple folk I have found the wood block or the steel engraving much more understood than the photo because detail has been left out.

Q. Don't you think that as they make more progress they will get used to something more detailed?



A. Yes.

Q. I take it you consider that the masses will take time to educate themselves in that way, and till then it is hardly feasible.

A. It is hardly worth the expense to begin with the cinema. I do not wish to be misunderstood on that.

Q. I understand you. You do not consider that better technique would assist? You said that public health films might go down. Did not that rather indicate that any film might go down if it were made equally clear and simple?

A. Simplification of detail on the film might assist greatly.

Q. It would obviously need extremely good technique and extremely good direction?

A. Yes.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer* : Do you think these cinema pictures are injurious to young children and they should be prohibited from seeing them altogether?

A. I do not think they are good for young children's eyes.

Q. Of what age do you say?

A. It is rather a question for a medical man.

Q. From your own experience do you know.

A. I never took my own children to the cinema for that reason, and because of the difficulty of seeing the detail which applies as well to them, until they were about 9.

Q. From your experience of the schools and colleges do you think that many young men and women will come forward at a small remuneration as workers in the cinema industry, as actors and actresses?

A. I think they would, provided that the arrangements were in the hands of really skilful organisers. I can give you an example. Years ago Professor Harkomer was desirous of starting a film theatre in Bushy where I was then teaching, and he expended a good deal of money. He made a call for helpers in filming *Ivanhoe* and one or two other historical novels. He got as much assistance as he wanted, and capable assistance. In Indian colleges there is a very great wealth of dramatic ability, as can be seen at any time if a drama is staged, particularly when it is staged in the vernacular. There is greater ability here taken altogether than there is in a country like England.

Q. If these boys are sent abroad to America, do you think there is a lot of jealousy there in showing the trade secrets? Have you any experience of this?

A. I know of the jealousy of trade secrets, but my knowledge is secondhand.

Q. Would you like your boys to go to America, or would you like men to come from America, Germany and so on to teach them here? Which do you prefer?

A. I think if it was to be done on any scale, the thing should be done in the country where the people are.

Q. The country of origin?

A. Yes, for various reasons.

Q. To encourage the cinema industry do you think that a course in cinema production should be introduced as a necessary subject in all Indian universities?

A. No, certainly not, because I think the university is a home of learning.

Q. Do you propose any special degress for a course in cinema?

A. No. I consider it is a technical branch of work, only suitable for technical institutions.

Q. Would you have a class for film production in the colleges of science?

A. I hardly know enough about film production, but I imagine that it is work more for skilled artisans than for college students, from the little I have seen. It divides itself into two parts, or should at least,—one the highly artistic for college students perhaps, and the other highly detailed. Visiting places where films are made, as I have done recently, I noticed a very distinct division of work in that respect, that on the one side keen-eyed girls were required with a very small standard of education, and on the other side men or women with considerable judgment and sense of proportion to create and to cut out redundancies in the scenario. There is such a difference of work that I should not like to express an opinion.

Q. You have seen these agricultural farming, and poultry educational films. Can you suggest any new subject for such educational films from your experience?

A. You now raise one of the points which creates in my mind considerable doubt as to the value of the film in education, such as agriculture, because it can only be used where there are processes going on. Directly the process ceases, the still pictures are quite as useful and much less expensive. In medical schools the processes are going on and there, I think, films are of the greatest value. In agriculture there are very few processes that lend themselves to filming. Fictitious processes may be reproduced for historical teaching, and they depend entirely on the worth of the representatives. In geography teaching there is almost as much difficulty about finding subjects suitable to the film, and this has been overcome in a good many cases by taking cinematographic pictures out of a train where the movement has been transferred from the objects to the camera.

*Chairman* : To show a range of mountains for instance?

A. Yes. Or a river valley, but that seems to be false. It has occurred to me as being false educationally, and the value of all demonstration in education lies in the truthfulness of the process. That accentuates the value of the film in the teaching of medicine—I do not like to use the word 'medicine', because medicine applies to a particular branch.

*Mr. Green* : Surgery?

A. Yes, surgery and biology.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer* : Would you like to have some amusement tax here for educational purposes as we have in Bombay and Bengal?

A. I do not believe in that.

Q. You do not want more money for education here?

A. We do want.

*Chairman* : Would you like to add anything?

A. There is one thing I do want to add about the morality of films. There is a great deal of opposition generally raised to the introduction of the sex motive in films. I consider that sex is the strongest urge that the human being has and its control is the most suitable theme for inspiration and the watching of a decently conducted love scene is really a good educational influence. I wanted to make this statement particularly. That is a reason why there should be, in my opinion, more Indian productions because no country has the right to force its morality upon another country. We are suffering rather from that by getting all our films from one small area at the present time. If scenes were acted by Indian actors there would be less criticism of the particular sex problems. It is possible that there might be some things which might shock the western mind, but no more so than kissing on the stage which does not shock the western mind but I think it is rather shocking to the Indian mind. Inartistic representation of love scenes merely makes them ridiculous, and I should be very sorry to see their elimination on the ground of suggestion, because suggestion in education usually depends either on the immediate environment of

the youth, home or school environment, or on his own particular temperament.

*Q.* Propensities?

*A.* Propensities are not created by suggestion. They are inherent. As regards the other, the criminal side, I believe that too is exaggerated. After all, the heroes of history, or most of them, would have got into trouble in criminal courts now-a-days.

*Colonel Crawford :* When you mentioned "decently produced", do you consider that a portion of the sex films coming from America are decently produced?

*A.* No. What I mean by decently produced is where sex is used to show that the desire for mating is creating also a desire to establish the home.

*Q.* I am talking of films where they draw a good deal from the life of the underworld.

*A.* I entirely agree with you as regards scenes drawn from the life of the underworld in any country whatsoever.

*Mr. Green :* Or even from the divorce courts in America or elsewhere?

*A.* Yes.

**Written Statement of Mr. MUKANDI LAL, Bar-at-Law, Deputy President, United Provinces Legislative Council, dated the 24th November 1927.**

I have the honour to send you short answers to the questions you have been pleased to send me through the Local Government.

1. I am not connected with the cinema industry as an industrialist or as an exhibitor, but I have been a frequent visitor to cinemas both in India and in Great Britain since 1912. From 1913 to March, 1919 I was in England; and since then I have been in India; and in both countries I have seen most of the important films.

2. (a) (1) It is the educated classes who patronise cinemas in India mostly.

(2) Illiterate classes visit cinemas very seldom. Interest in the cinema, both with the educated and the uneducated classes in India, is on the increase, but the Indian audience does not patronise cinemas in the same way as a matter of habit as I found them to do in Great Britain. In Great Britain cinemas were more popular among the lower middle classes and poorer classes who could not afford to go to theatres and music halls. With the higher classes the cinema was not so popular and they were interested in it only on occasions when important films were on the screen. In India, it would not be an exaggeration to say that, cinema is patronised in practically the same way as it is done in England by the higher classes. Namely, in India people do not visit cinema as a matter of habit or as I might call it as a matter of course but as a rule when some important film is on the screen.

(b) Indian audiences in India go mostly to the lower classes of the cinema hall and well-to-do and higher classes of Indians frequent the higher classes. It is only during the run of a very few films that cinema halls are packed to their fullest capacity.

(c) In the audience I found, very small percentage of children under 14—say about 5 per cent. but in places like Naini Tal or Mussoorie where there are childrens' schools there, the percentage of children under 14 might be about 25 per cent. on particular occasions. Sometimes it may be 75 per cent. children in some shows.

**PART 1.**

3 The films that are most popular with the Indian audiences are the films of grand spectacular character, classical and historical subjects. Films

with eastern plot and mystery are appreciated more than films of detective stories or mechanical inventions.

4. Exhibitors do not cater to Indian audiences because their films are not meant for Indian audiences. They are produced for the larger markets of America and Europe and they exhibit films with an eye to the taste of Europeans and Americans.

5. Indian produced films depicting Indian life are not available to the exhibitors because the exhibitors depend on the film producers who produce films for American and European audiences. Besides, the exchange system and time limit for keeping films does not make films of Indian life available to exhibitors.

(a) Films are not produced with a view to show the Indian life and Indian ideals in their best light but to pick up certain Indian Puranic episodes and present them in modern colours or to exhibit the abnormal and worst side of the uncivilised section of Indian Society. They do not give a real Indian ideal of these historical and Puranic episodes. However, those which are in the market (of Indian historical and mythological subjects) are much better than the films which depict European life in its love episodes and the tragic side of life.

(b) They are popular.

(c) Indian films are not so profitable to exhibitors because they are not patronised by the European audiences and in the large towns most of the customers of the cinema come from the European section of the public. The taste of the Indian public, particularly the uneducated classes is not yet created to such an extent that they would make up for the loss that the exhibitor would sustain by the absence of the European public. Indian films would be very popular with the rural population, because they would understand and follow them even without reading legends. The cinemas are popular in the large towns only. If cinemas were established in the country towns Indian films would pay much more than European films. Of very successful Indian produced films I would cite as the latest example the Fatima Company's latest film which was exhibited at Allahabad on the 4th November and subsequent dates. I believe the name of the film was "Bul-Bule Paristan." It was characteristically an eastern film, cast in a very fine artistic and dramatic manner.

6. (a) Certainly.

(b) (1) Films of historical, mythological and social life of different provinces and streets, landscapes and rural scenes would be very popular. Historical, mythological social and political subjects would appeal to the educated classes.

(2) Mythological subjects and grand spectacular scenes and life of big cities would appeal to the illiterate population.

7. The above mentioned Indian subjects would be very suitable for Indian troops also, but in addition to these I would suggest scenes of European battles, army and navy training and similar military subjects. To British troops the same subjects would appeal which appeal to the Indian audience, with more of European life.

8. (a) No.

(b) Difficulties in the way of the film industry in India are the same as one would experience in organising the industry elsewhere, viz:—

(1) The absence of capital.

(2) The absence of actors and actresses—educated and intelligent classes not taking to the stage.

(3) Lack of spirit of adventure. But in my opinion the main difficulty is the want of capital. If capital was forthcoming all the world provides so much field, scenes, natural scenery and the world provides so much field, scenes, natural scenery and monumental buildings for producing films as India does.

9. No, because the industry is controlled by the European and American firms who do not care to lower the prices and naturally demand the highest prices they can get and which they get from such well known exhibitors as Madan and others.

14. Yes.

15. Yes.

16. They do not exist in abundance, but if capital were forthcoming or a company was established such persons would be forthcoming and their number would soon increase. I am sure that many educated men and women would take to it.

17. No.

18. Yes, if Government was to advance loans or subsidise companies or establish an All India Government Cinematograph Corporation.

19. In this country the film production expenses would be much less for obvious reasons which apply to every industry.

20. Expenses that the Government would incur on the film industry would in the long run be very beneficial for the public, and the Government would not have wasted their money. Such expenditure could be met out of the amusement tax and the tax on scientific instruments.

21. I am in agreement with the proposal indicated in question No. 21.

22. Until India has developed its cinema industry India would not be benefitted by giving effect to the resolution of the Imperial Conference.

23. My belief is that when the Indian film industry is developed and India can produce good films the demand for them would automatically be created in this country and abroad, among the people who desire to see Indian scenes and Indian life and Indian historical films. So the measure which I would suggest would be that the Indian Government take steps to develop the Indian film industry.

## PART 2.

24. (a) Demoralising films are bound to have demoralising effect, injurious to the public and such films are those which throw on the screen tragic scenes, murders, detective stories, elopements in the ordinary love plots of European life.

(b) Yes, there are many films which one might call immoral and criminal-ly suggestive.

(c) The films which I have referred to in my answer 24. (a) are harmful. They are harmful to all men and women and particularly to young persons and children.

(d) No.

(e) I can not say exactly how far films are responsible for the increase of crime though criminal films cannot but influence an impressionable audience. I may as well say that cinema cannot be held responsible directly to even one crime out of a thousand in my province for the reason that the cinema is not accessible to all criminal classes, otherwise they might have learnt much from detective stories and scenes of pirates and murders.

25. In my opinion such love scenes of European life in which flirtation and kissing takes a prominent part are revolting to Indian taste; and this aspect of European life has been very well avoided by the Fatima Company's film to which I referred above.

26. (a) No.

(b) Not religious but racial susceptibilities would be touched and racial animosity increased by the films exhibiting racial differences and indicating racial superiority of one race over the other (I saw many of this type in London which were very popular with the Londoners.)

27. (a) I would not say that the European films misrepresent the western civilisation but they do lower it in the eyes of Indians. Western life is unintelligible not only to uneducated but to a vast portion of educated Indians also who have not been abroad. On this point I would suggest

that the censorship should so control the films that some of the films which I have referred to above may not be allowed to come on the screen. Undesirable results follow as Indians are likely to follow the worst side of western life as they find it on the films.

(b) There are several films which misrepresent Indian civilisation and Indian ideals. They are produced by European companies mostly out of India. They come here to take Indian state scenes, Indian buildings and Indian scenery and do the rest out of India.

28. The answer to this question will be found in the previous answers.

29. Yes.

30. And the age I put down is 14; but I would not prohibit children even below that age from visiting cinemas, which exhibit historical, mythological and other good subjects and typical events because I think if we prohibit them we would be depriving them of a great source of education. I would forbid children visiting films of western social life and detective stories. If censorship was so effective that we could do away with such films as have any demoralising effect then there would be no need of prohibiting children from visiting cinemas at all.

31. Yes.

32. I would suggest All India Censorship which would apply to every province. I do not desire to give any province freedom to censor any film, because there have been some cases in which the films have been allowed in one province and disallowed in another.

33. My answer to (a), (b), and (c) is yes, but still the censorship is desirable.

34. I have already given an answer to this question. I would advocate a Central Board of Censorship and to away with the Provincial Boards. The majority of the members of the Board should be non-officials representing all the Provincial and Central Legislatures and men who are interested in art, history, and general welfare of the society. I would have on the Board a representative of the film industry also. Such a Board would be a sort of Advisory Board to which all films censored would be submitted by the Censor who should be a paid officer located, say at Bombay.

40. The posters and the handbills would naturally be censored if they related to censored or censorable films.

44. The press, which includes the public, could help in maintaining a good standard of films by reviewing the films and condemning the undesirable films.

45. I would not allow any interference on the part of Government in the film producing industry or with the internal affairs of the film producing agencies. I would not recommend the inspection of studios but I would advocate the registration of film producing companies. I have left out some questions which were purely of technical type and can be answered only by those who are in the industry. My experience is that of a visitor who goes to cinemas by way of recreation and to see notable films.

**Oral Evidence of Mr. MUKANDI LAL, Bar.-at-Law, Deputy President, United Provinces Legislative Council, on Monday, the 5th December 1927.**

*Chairman :* You have sent us a pretty long statement which explains itself, for which I thank you. There are one or two points on which I should like to get some further information. I was rather struck by your statement that the illiterate classes visit the cinemas very seldom.

A. That is my personal experience. It may be due to the fact that I only go to particular films which I know are well known, that there are well known actors in them and so on.

**Q.** You choose your films?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** This refers to western films?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** I suppose in such places you do not see many of these illiterate classes there?

**A.** Not many of them except school boys and students.

**Q.** That is to say, where western films show social life the illiterate classes do not go?

**A.** They go but in very small numbers.

**Q.** So that the complaint that the illiterate classes in this country get a wrong idea of western life by showing these films is not so strong as to call for any attention?

**A.** It is. Those who go there carry that idea.

**Q.** But you say they are very small in number.

**A.** These cinemas are to be found in big towns and it is only a very small section of our illiterate and rural population who has an occasion to see the cinema at all.

**Q.** That leads me to the next point, namely, that when they say that the cinema is playing havoc with the illiterate classes in this country and lowering the westerner in the eyes of the men here—it is not correct?

**A.** No. It is only a very small percentage of this class of people that go to these cinemas.

**Q.** But these illiterate classes frequent the Indian shows in larger numbers?

**A.** Yes. I think the reason is that they can follow the Indian films without explanations, because it is their own surroundings and they understand. And I think if they were educated and could read English they would go to western films as well. Their difficulty is that they cannot follow the plot.

**Q.** I suppose you are for encouraging the growth of the Indian cinema industry?

**A.** Yes. But I would not bar western films also.

**Q.** Would you not make it more difficult to get the in order to encourage the growth of Indian films?

**A.** No. Unless the film came under the law of censorship and it was undesirable I would not bar a European film.

**Q.** You would not resort to any extraneous method such as imposing a higher duty?

**A.** If it were in my power I would rather encourage the right sort of film, because it is a means of education in western ideals, western social life and so on.

**Q.** So you are content with the censorship?

**A.** Yes, without putting any sort of duty or any bar on the western film.

**Q.** Do you think the present standard of western films shown in this country—is there anything objectionable in them?

**A.** The films that I have seen—I would not say there was particularly anything objectionable in them. To an Indian mind the western social life, particularly in its sensual side—a film directly taken from the novel and drama where love plays a very important part, when it is seen by an Indian audience which has not seen western life in its best, gives quite a different impression. I saw a very good film recently in Allahabad about which I have mentioned in my statement. There were two or three love plots in it, but one thing that was characteristically Indian and eastern about it was there was no kissing on the stage. That is one thing about which the

Indian mind seems to be very peculiar and it is more or less revolting to them.

Q. Of course it is not our habit to do it except in private. (Laughter).

A. I know a number of Indians who have been to European countries and they have even European wives, but they hesitate to kiss their wives in public or on the platform. I have not kissed my wife in the presence of even my servants. Even where there is one servant present, I do not kiss her.

Q. You have a European wife?

A. Yes, and that is one of her grievances against me. That is only to illustrate the Indian mentality.

Q. Whether educated or uneducated, it is a common failure or virtue whatever you may call it, with us.

A. Yes. It lowers the westerner in Indians' eyes in this scene: when they see love scenes, elopements, seductions and so on, that gives them the impression that these are common occurrences in Europe.

Q. How long have you been in the west?

A. I was there for six years.

Q. Have you re-visited it since you came back?

A. No.

Q. Of course, films give an exaggerated view of life?

A. Yes.

Q. Do they misrepresent their life?

A. They do not misrepresent in the way that it comes out of the mind of the artist. It gives a phase of life, but it gives an impression to the people as if this was a common thing in the west.

Q. Do you think that that sort of impression is produced even among the educated people?

A. Those who have not been to the west.

Q. Then what is the remedy for that?

A. I do not think there is any remedy for that.

Q. Except education I suppose?

A. Yes.

Q. And making them familiar?

A. Yes.

Q. You think that the censorship as it is now done in that connection is sufficiently adequate?

A. So far it is quite all right.

Q. You have no reason to be dissatisfied with it?

A. No. It may be there are some films which have escaped my notice.

Q. You go to the cinema pretty often?

A. Yes, very often to the western shows. I am sorry to say that I have not seen more than half a dozen eastern shows.

Q. You have to take your wife also, and naturally you had to go to the western shows generally?

A. Yes. When I go, I go to see only well-known western films.

Q. From what you have seen you do not think there was anything objectionable in them which should have been cut off?

A. No.

Q. The best remedy, it is suggested, is to create more Indian films so that the Indian public may get their own productions. Would you advocate such a remedy?

A. Yes.

Q. If there is any evil produced by western films the proper way to deal with it is to produce more Indian films?



A. Yes.

Q. And you think public funds should be spent, you think as a public man that public money should be spent?

A. The Government should come in here. Though I could not mention them in my note there are many ways in which the Government could assist the industry both as art and as an instrument of education and from the industrial point of view. But what I would have liked to suggest is that one way would be to encourage the industry, of course, by financial help. Whether the Government has its own establishment or advances loans to companies—that is the monetary side; I don't attach so much importance to the monetary side as the other side. The other side I would suggest is that Government place all its public buildings at the disposal of cinema companies for stage purposes.

Q. Give facilities to use their public buildings?

A. Yes, and historical monuments, picture galleries, etc. If necessary I would even have legislation to make all religious buildings available for cinema purposes. That is to say, if temples were not to be used on account of religious sentiment, I would even go the length of having legislation for the use of even temples and mosques for taking photographs.

Q. I suppose you know the Hindu idea that the deity should not be photographed?

A. I do not mean images but the temples, architecture and so forth.

Q. But what about deities carried in procession, would you allow that? No doubt some people do it.

A. Yes, I would like processions taken.

Q. I know, but they won't stand it, down in the South.

A. In Northern India there won't be any great objection to it. Then another way in which they could help is to make it a part of their Education Department; I would have the cinemas attached to the Education Department rather than to the Industries Department and for this reason that if the Government really took over the industry they could have historical plays based on Indian drama, Indian scenery, Indian mythology, and the social side also of Indian life, and they could serve educational purposes by lending those films to the exhibitors at a nominal cost or, if possible, free. That would be one way of encouraging the Indian industry.

Q. You want Government to manufacture these films for educational purposes?

A. And lend them to exhibitors at a nominal cost or, if possible, free.

Q. And now in order to advance the Indian industry also on the entertainment side, would you advocate a compulsory system of enforcing all cinemas to show a certain percentage of Indian films either in a week or in a month?

A. I did not give my thought to that though I am as a rule against all sorts of compulsion. Supposing your cinema is in the European quarter, if you make it compulsory then I think the theatre will have to shut down.

Q. Why not create a taste in the European, provided the films are satisfactorily passed by a Board on which Europeans are represented? Supposing they are satisfied that a film is fit for universal exhibition and a certain proportion of such films is made compulsory.

A. If the percentage is very small.....

Q. To begin with, but gradually rising till Indian films have improved.

A. I would not object if the percentage is very small; otherwise it would hit some of the cinemas very hard.

Q. But you must also create in them a taste for Indian things—don't you agree?

A. Yes, I agree, but I don't know whether compulsion will do it.

Q. You know they are encouraging the British film industry by this quota system?

A. No, I don't know that.

Q. They have passed a law that the quota system must be enforced.

A. Yes, we could adopt that system here too.

Q. You say that Indian films are not so profitable to Indian exhibitors. Apparently you are referring to shows in the European quarters. The evidence we have had elsewhere is that Indian films attract a very large audience.

A. Only of Indians. Here also wherever there are Indian films say in this cinema at Amenabad or near the Kaiser Bagh, they are very much patronised.

Q. What is this? You say "the exchange system and time limit for keeping films does not make films of Indian life available to exhibitors".

A. What happens is this. These cinema companies exchange their films and they have to lend their films or take them at a definite time and they cannot keep those films for a long time. Then supposing I have got a film of Indian life and I want to exchange with some companies for European films they will refuse. They will say "we don't like your film and therefore we won't take your film"; so I will have to pay the exhibitor a very high fee for taking the film on loan or hire. Otherwise if the film is passable it can be exchanged with a European company. They will say "You take our film, we will take yours".

Q. What is your suggestion for dealing with that difficulty? After all it is a trade difficulty, you cannot legislate.

A. It is a trade difficulty and we cannot legislate.

Q. You must leave it to the development of the trade.

A. Except that if you have the quota system for a certain percentage to be taken, there may be a remedy.

Q. Can you tell us where this film "Bulbule Paristan" was produced?

A. It was produced in Bombay and exhibited in Allahabad. There was one thing very enterprising about that. I hear the proprietress of this is a lady; Fatima is her own name; she produced this film in Bombay and I understand she was moving about taking the film as a piece of advertisement for her company.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer*: She is no longer there, she is at Delhi.

A. She is going about now.

Q. She has left, she has lost.

A. On that film?

Q. On the industry.

A. Well, I saw it on the 4th November in Allahabad and the lady herself was in the box there watching the performance. I was told that she was moving about with that film. It was a very good film and was very much appreciated.

*Chairman*: Now, I am rather interested in your answer to question No. 21. You are in agreement with the proposal indicated in question No. 21. It is rather an interference with private enterprise creating a Government monopoly in distribution.

A. It would not be a Government monopoly. Government would not bar others from producing films. What I would like Government to do is to be one of the film producing agencies.

Q. Producing films mainly of an educational character?

A. Of an educational character and of a historical character.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer*: Will the legislature sanction this? You are the Vice-President of the Council, would you say that?

A. I must say that my experience of my Council is so bitter that I will not say anything. I moved a resolution for a picture gallery and they practically voted against it.

*Chairman :* I notice you are for stricter censorship in regard to kissing scenes, but would it not take away from the attractiveness of the Western film?

*A.* If it is not done in the manner in which it is done in some of these films.

*Q.* You see they don't produce films for India but for the larger market, their own market.

*A.* That is the whole difficulty.

*Q.* India hardly plays any very prominent part as a customer for films. It is very insignificant compared with their own country.

*A.* Well, that is the great problem.

*Q.* That is why you suggest Indian films should be produced? We must take the production into our own hands and thereby reduce the consumption of foreign films?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* What is your opinion, do you think that until India has developed its cinema industry India would not be benefited by giving effect to the Imperial Conference Resolution?

*A.* Not at all. What have you got to offer to them. Unless we have got good films of our own which have a market or a demand there, we can only be a dumping ground for other people's film. We shall have to take but will not give. If we can produce good Indian films then we may benefit. This committee's purpose, so far as I can understand it, will never be served by enforcing this Resolution of the Imperial Conference at present. That would kill the industry in fact.

*Q.* It would be another competition on favourable terms?

*A.* And it would discourage the Indian industry. And in the matter of Indian industry and Indian films I think if we take over and handle the industry we can produce European films much better than in European countries and for this reason: in European countries when they have to produce these films they have to prepare dummy buildings which are very costly affairs. I remember some Italian films, for instance, a film of Cleopatra. They had to spend a colossal amount on the preparation of dummy buildings. Now here we have such buildings on the spot, for instance, palaces, historical buildings, the Benares ghats.

*Q.* But they are not of the type they want.

*A.* They could be used for Italian and Egyptian scenes. Our buildings could serve their purpose very well.

*Q.* Now, you refer in your answer to question No. 27,—you say "There are several films which misrepresent Indian civilisation and Indian ideals; they are produced by European companies mostly outside India; they come here to take Indian state scenes, Indian buildings and Indian scenery and do the rest out of India. Now I suppose if they misrepresent us, before giving facilities to such foreign companies who come out here you would insist on their satisfying us as to the scenario, plot, etc?"

*A.* They even misrepresent the ideal underlying their films. I will refer to the films about Buddha's life and Krishna's life. The scenery part is all right but the Indian outlook, the Indian point of view underlying the whole film is wanting there. That is how they misrepresent us.

*Q.* You say they were produced by European companies?

*A.* Yes. To give one concrete instance one company I remember came to Jaipur. I have actually seen in their film the Jaipur streets and palaces.

*Q.* Are you referring to "The Light of Asia?"

*A.* I don't remember the name of the film.

*Q.* But what is your remedy for that, in order to prevent such misrepresentation?

*A.* If Indian companies and actors come forward, then this misrepresentation would be stopped.

**Q.** You think they should be given preferential facilities for using such places?

**A.** Yes, and then it comes again to that, the organisation of the Indian industry and help to Indian companies who would not misrepresent us. I do not mean to say Europeans deliberately misrepresent us but they cannot see from the Indian point of view; they do it unconsciously.

**Q.** But you want an All India Censorship Board. You want Provincial Boards to be abolished?

**A.** Yes, in this sense that is—there ought to be one standard of censorship and the Board I have suggested may be located in Bombay, for this reason—that most of the films come through Bombay; and the Director would be a paid official. He would have the power of censoring the films but his censorship would be subject to a Board on which there will be a non-official majority. That is what I have suggested.

**Q.** You mean you don't want the members of the Board to see each and every film; but if the paid officer, who will see the films, rejects any film, there will be a right of appeal to the Board?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** If he passes a film? Your idea is that this Board would have the power of bringing it again to his notice?

**A.** Yes, bring it to his notice.

**Q.** This Board may be in every province; there will be boards who will not do the censoring themselves but they would bring things to the notice of the Censor and veto films passed by the Censor.

**A.** The provincial Board is to have the power of recommending films for censorship.

**Q.** And the power of veto also they would have; but if a film is recommended by the Censor, say, for the Punjab, should there be a common standard? There have been cases where a film has been passed in the United Provinces but was censored in Bengal or the Punjab. That may be due to local conditions. For instance, feeling may be bitter on a particular point in some one province. The United Provinces may not indulge in such feeling or sentimental objection, but, say, on the North-West Frontier there may be local conditions which call for particular action.

**A.** A film like that should be censored everywhere, because that film might create that feeling which does not exist at the moment, say, in Lucknow but which may be engineered.

**Q.** No film will survive that, if you are going to yield to sentimental objections.

**A.** But there will be very few films which will come under that category, and those are films which may be described as communal and racial feeling films.

**Q.** It may be communal and yet in Madras it may pass without objection from anybody, whereas here or in the Punjab on account of local tension for the present it may create some objection. Why should Madras suffer for the vagaries of the Punjab?

**A.** There is a great deal of truth in that and when I was advocating a common standard, it was on moral grounds, not so much on racial grounds. I see your point now, which is that a film may excite the Muhammadans of the Punjab while there are few Muhammadans in Madras.

**Q.** Not only are they few but they do not take such a serious view of the matter. On the other hand, we had a witness in Peshawar who would not have any mythological film because he said the Muhammadans would object to it.

**A.** Still I think it is best to have a common standard.

**Q.** If you are for the rapid growth of the Indian industry, censorship is needed in order to facilitate putting films on the market, but unless you have provincial boards for censoring them production will suffer. For

instance, I produce a film in Madras. If you have a Central Board, say in Bombay or Calcutta, why should I take the trouble to take it there.

A. Why should not the Director of Censorship go to Madras?

Mr. Green : On account of the work he has to do.

Chairman : How many people would do the work?

A. It depends on the number of the board.

Q. So far as foreign films are concerned, I understand your point.

A. What I had in mind was that our Censor would be a man of great eminence and experience and we would give him sole charge. It would not be difficult for him to go to Madras and there consult the local board.

Q. You want a touring officer?

Mr. Green : May I quote just a few figures. The actual inspection of films for censorship last year amounted to 6½ hours a day for 5 days a week all through the year. One officer could not do all that work and also tour all round India, unless he has several deputies.

A. It would be like this: all the films coming from outside generally go through Bombay, and in the case of local films produced in Madras, Lucknow or Calcutta, the Director will go there and see the film.

Mr. Green : It will be a physical impossibility unless he has assistance.

A. Yes, he may have assistance and there the local committees will help him.

Chairman : You mean, for local products, the Director or Assistant Director may do it with the help of the local boards?

A. Yes.

Q. And all foreign films will be censored at one centre?

A. Yes.

Q. Which you would call the All India Board?

A. Yes.

Q. But every province would claim to be represented there?

A. Yes.

Q. Surely you don't mean to say you would take a man from the Punjab for merely doing honorary work or even if he is paid for the job?

A. Well, that is the whole trouble, for which I would suggest that these local boards should function in their own provinces.

Q. By way of a check or veto? But how are they to find out, supposing a film is passed in Bombay by the Director or the Board? He must watch if there is any objection elsewhere?

A. I am prepared to trust the Director. He would be more likely to be inclined to too much censoring than to letting things go.

Q. But are you not satisfied with the present power which the District Magistrate has to suspend? The District Magistrate in any place, if he thinks a film is objectionable, can suspend it and report the matter for orders to the local Government. Probably you would make him report for the orders of the local board. That would be the only difference in your scheme. Are you not satisfied with that?

A. That gives a local power again.

Q. Your scheme is for a local power of veto, it does not matter who applies the veto.

A. I am for a paid officer.

Q. But he will be assisted by a board?

A. Yes.

Q. Even for the purpose of vetoing?

A. Yes.

Q. Now, have you seen any posters or handbills that struck you as objectionable?

A. No. I could not say so.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* Why is there no entertainment tax in your province? Is it due to the hardship of the small cinemas? You don't want this tax anywhere?

A. I have said in my note if the Government is going in for this industry they will have to find funds, and one of the ways I have suggested in my note is this entertainment tax, which may be very small but it must be uniform and then it should be all over India, not only in one province.

Q. So you are in favour of the tax?

A. Yes in order to assist the industry. It will be earmarked for this industry only and be an all India affair, not a local affair, because I want the industry to be an All India department, not a local one.

*Chairman:* But it is now a provincial transferred subject.

A. Yes, but I want it to be made an All India department.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* What else? What aid can municipalities and district boards give to assist this industry,—not monetary aid?

A. At least in this province they are too poor even to keep their present roads together.

Q. There is no board of censors here?

A. I am not aware of it.

Q. You don't get any public spirited gentlemen to serve on it.

A. The experiment has not been tried.

Q. You would like to have a board?

A. My scheme is this. If the United Provinces have a board also to help the Censor, I think the men will be forthcoming.

Q. Won't you suggest any other tax, besides this amusement tax, to help the industry?

A. I would like a tax, (not a new tax but the tax which is on machines and scientific instruments) I would like that tax to be earmarked for this purpose.

*Colonel Crawford:* I am very interested in your answer to question No. 22 regarding the question of giving effect to the Resolution of the Imperial Conference. You advocate the quota system for Indian films in India even though the industry has not yet developed?

A. Yes.

Q. When you come to the question of taking part in an Empire market you say it is not good for India because the industry has not developed.

A. Quite.

Q. Now, if we can get a quota in the Empire market, similarly it should encourage the production of films for that particular market. You made a particularly interesting point when you suggested that the Indian industry should not confine itself to producing Indian life, but that it can produce other types of life to suit this particular market. Now those markets are much bigger than the Indian market. In view of those facts, are you still inclined to stick to your position?

A. Unless we can produce films in India there is no point in accepting the Resolution of the Imperial Conference because we have not got anything to give; but once we have developed the industry then we can think about it.

Q. Would you say the same for the quota system in India?

A. That would apply to the quota system also; how can you make the quota system compulsory unless you have the films.

Q. The moment you put on the quota system you make a market for Indian films and you encourage the film industry for a particular type of film?

A. But how can you force a cinema? If you make it a law and force them they will ask "Where are the Indian films"? You can't turn round

and tell him to show half a dozen Indian films over and over again. So when we take up the quota system it will be when we have some Indian films ready. The making of the quota system cannot produce the films at once, simply because the Government has passed a law.

**Q.** Apparently in England the very fact of such a law coming into force gave a boom to the industry.

**A.** But here I don't think that will follow. If we have a quota system here that won't at once produce Indian films.

**Q.** You are producing a good number of Indian films now. Don't you think that more will be forthcoming? (No answer).

**Mr. Neogy:** You consider that European films do not misrepresent Western civilisation. What do you mean?

**A.** What I mean is this: whatever picture they give us through the screen, as I said in answer to the President's question, they do not put before us a false ideal. They do represent one side of the European life, though it may not be the ideal European life.

**Q.** It is, all the same, an aspect of their life; and in so far you are anxious to see certain picture altogether excluded from the films, pictures which may be quite correct to life (and they are quite correct to life according to you).—Won't that be tantamount to misrepresenting Western civilisation?

**A.** No, it won't.

**Q.** Take the case of kissing to which you take exception. Well there are circumstances in which people in the West would resort to kissing and in so far as you would seek to exclude kissing from such a scene, to that extent it would be a misrepresentation?

**A.** That is you are excluding one aspect of European life.

**Q.** Exactly, and you therefore make it unnatural?

**A.** That does not mean we are misrepresenting them.

**Q.** That is showing them on the screen in an aspect which is not true to life. A man would in those circumstances act quite differently and you allow the picture to proceed to a certain extent, then stop; to that extent it would be a misrepresentation, would it not?

**A.** I would not say misrepresenting but omitting one aspect.

**Q.** It would be an untrue representation. Supposing western civilization is misrepresented. How does it matter to us at all? It is the look out of the Westerners; it is they who have been manufacturing such films. How are we concerned with it?

**A.** Of course, it is the concern of Europeans.

**Q.** You mean it affects them, and it is a political question?

**A.** It affects Indian also in this way: they would not have a very high ideal of European life before them. At least in that respect it will not be desirable for us to follow European civilization.

**Q.** Do you mean to say that European civilization will be lowered in the eyes of the Indians? Do you mean they will have a sort of abhorrence for it? In what way would this abhorrence lead to imitation?

**A.** There I don't agree with you. There may be something which we may not have seen before and yet when we actually see it we may perhaps appreciate it. But unconsciously we get used to it and gradually we will try and copy it. That is what is actually happening today. There is a question in your questionnaire which asks whether there are any crimes committed directly as a result of the influence of the cinema, but I may say there have been several instances where boys directly they have returned from the cinema, have taken to practising some crimes.

**Q.** Then your idea is that Indians should be wrapped up in cotton wool, and you won't show them western life?

**A.** I don't say that.

**Q.** In reply to question 24 (a) you say "demoralising films are bound to have a demoralising effect and such films are those which throw on the screen tragic scenes, murders, detective stories and elopements of the ordinary love plots of European life."

**A.** Yes, I would like to exclude them.

**Q.** You would not have tragedy even?

**A.** But it has not any baneful effect on the minds of the people. On the whole, I look at the cinema from an educational point of view, and I think if the State were to take matters in hand, they should produce more propaganda films as also educational films. I think they could also carry on political work by means of the cinema.

**Oral Evidence of Mrs. A. K. ANSELL, Secretary, United Provinces Poultry Association, Lucknow, on Tuesday, the 6th December 1927.**

*Chairman:* Mrs. Ansell, you are the Superintendent of the Poultry Farm?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Where is that farm?

**A.** It is here in Lucknow.

**Q.** Did you have a film prepared here of your experiments?

**A.** Yes. The G. I. P. Railway authorities prepared one for me. Their Indian photographer came here with the Publicity Officer and took the photographs on our farm and prepared the film in Bombay.

**Q.** I suppose you had not to pay anything?

**A.** We did have to pay, I think, Rs. 800. Our Government bought a copy of the film for us. I think the G. I. P. people gave us that copy at the rate of Re. 1-8-0 per foot for the film. This, I think, was reduced to half of the original price by the kindness of the Agent of the G. I. P. Railway. I took this film to England and also showed it at the World's Poultry Congress this year in Canada. I was told in England that the material the film was made of was not quite up-to-date. They told me that the film was made of very old fashioned material and it would not last very long. I gathered from them that the film was not quite up-to-date in finish.

**Q.** When was this film taken?

**A.** It was taken about 18 months ago.

**Q.** I suppose you gave free shows in Canada and in England?

**A.** I gave one free show to my friends in England, and the other shows to the public in Canada. I took this Indian film to Canada to show what India was doing, as a contribution to the Poultry Congress of the World, because many nations were represented at this Congress.

**Q.** What was the general opinion about the technique of the film made here?

**A.** Oh, crowds came to see it, and they were all extraordinarily interested in it, because they could see Indians doing the actual poultry work. My manager is a Brahmin, and to see Indians doing the work on the poultry farm interested people very much in Canada. The film depicted Indian poultry farming work, the chickens in the villages, and the villagers bringing them into towns and so on. Yes, it interested people very much to see the Indians working and their life depicted.

**Q.** Was it a free show?

**A.** I suppose people paid at the gate to see the whole exhibition, and India had a section in that exhibition. I had a section quite as big as this room allotted to me for India. I had taken a lot of birds over, and also a



lot of Lucknow works of art, and I got numbers of orders for Indian things. But this unkind Government would not pay my passage and I had to go at my own expense.

*Q.* You think that such sort of films would interest the people in England and Canada or America?

*A.* I think if you prepared films here to show in the west, they would be a great draw.

*Q.* Do you mean as regards scenery and life?

*A.* Yes. All sorts of Indian scenes. If you prepare good films over here and show them in the west, they will, I think, bring in far more money because the audiences there can afford to go to cinemas. Here very few can afford even 4 or 8 annas for a seat.

*Q.* Have you seen "The Light of Asia"?

*A.* No.

*Q.* Have you seen any Indian films here?

*A.* No, I have not seen any here, but I have seen some in Calcutta. I am afraid I very seldom go to the cinemas.

*Q.* Did you show your film to the ordinary public here?

*A.* It has been shown free at many railway stations in the third class waiting rooms. It has also been shown to the public in Calcutta in the Eden Gardens.

*Q.* Were you present at any of these shows?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Did the ordinary people follow it all right?

*A.* Oh, yes.

*Q.* Were they able to understand it all or not?

*A.* Of course; they enjoyed seeing the life, the action of the birds and so on.

*Q.* Do you think they obtained some benefit from attending it?

*A.* I think so. And I have the titles in Urdu so that they can follow what it means.

*Q.* You see, yesterday we were told that the people here do not understand these films and that it was not of much use showing them the films.

*A.* Well, I do think that the illiterate people as yet understand very little, because, if you show a photograph they do not know which way up it is. But that will all come in time. The more you show them the more they will understand. That is one of the best ways of educating them, isn't it?

*Q.* You believe it will help in educating the masses here?

*A.* Simple films, not complicated films. And films about their own industries and their own life, thought out very carefully as to how they would appeal to them, prepared by your own people who know how they think.

*Q.* You think that will be a useful thing?

*A.* I should say that it will be a most useful thing. One of the most valuable ways of teaching.

*Q.* On hygiene, public health, and so on.

*A.* And all the cottage industries. Certainly. But I think the films need to be prepared from the eastern point of view. Let the man who is preparing the films know how the audience will regard them. I mean it is no use my preparing a film when I could not enter into their point of view. Our outlook is different.

*Q.* So you believe in that method of educating the people?

*A.* I do most strongly.

*Q.* And you would advocate Government spending money in such directions?

A. I would, provided the films are prepared carefully, not from a scientific point of view. They want to be very carefully thought out so that they may appeal to the villager. I should say if we could only go on lorries and take the cinemas to the villagers that would bring great joy to the villagers. Travelling lorries:—Because I don't think they can afford to pay money in coming to the theatres. I think the theatres must be a loss to many people who are running them. In England the seats are so extraordinarily cheap compared to what they are here. There, a workman has to spend only 3d. or 4d. to go to the cinema, which means only 2 annas practically. Here it is 4 annas, which is a lot of money for the people here, for an amusement of that sort.

Q. Have you any experience of children's education?

A. Well, of course, only at home. I have children coming to my films here but I have not any experience.

*Colonel Crawford:* I have one question. Have your films of poultry breeding interested the villagers. Have you shown it to the villagers at all?

A. Not exactly in the villages, but to the villagers who come into the big district fairs.

Q. Do you think it interests them?

A. They follow the movement of it and I think they realise that I am trying to show them bigger and better fowls. I should say they don't understand it all, they could not. My film has to be a film that appeals to the educated as well.

Q. But you think they recognise that they are fowls?

A. Oh yes, they crow and make all sorts of noises like the birds do when they are watching the film.

Q. We had a witness yesterday who said they could not even understand what it was.

A. I think animal life they understand, on account of the movement in it.

Q. How was your film made up? It simply shows different sizes of fowls?

A. Oh, no, it shows the farm starting in the morning, and all the work of the day, the laying of eggs, how the chickens come out in incubators and how they grow.

Q. Do you think they understood?

A. Oh, yes, we explained in Urdu, for instance, "this is the machine which hatches the eggs". That they see, the drawer of the machine being full of eggs.

Q. Do you think they can follow?

A. I think they do to a certain extent. They are extraordinarily interested. They think I am a sort of magic person who produces chickens in half an hour.

*Mr. Green:* You told us this film cost Rs. 800. Can you tell us what length it was?

A. Yes, it was 1,700 feet.

Q. I think you got it quite cheap.

A. Yes, it was at a reduced price.

Q. You told us that simple films would certainly be appreciated, that we should at any rate not start with giving them other than simple films. Would you be prepared to take the view that for such simple films a commercial agency is hardly possible? I mean in this way—a firm of film producers who are dealing with commercial productions are not likely to be able to produce such films.

A. If they had on their staff people who understood the industry they were trying to film, and who understood the village outlook.

Q. It would depend on having the people who had the necessary understanding?

A. Yes, in co-operation with them. But I should say that none of these educational films can possibly pay really.

Q. Oh, no. I didn't mean that. I was wondering whether the same agency which prepares commercial films would be able to prepare simple films.

A. Yes, because we should employ people who thoroughly understood the art of making films from the technical side.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* Why did you put on those titles in Urdu also? Why not in Pushtu?

A. Because Urdu is the language of the province.

Q. Because it is better understood in the province? Of course, Hindi would be. You would prefer Hindustani for these films, so that the illiterate and other people might understand?

A. You see the G. I. P. people who prepared the film did not give me the titles in Urdu; they gave them to me only in English and I had to have them made by some Meerut firm—a Muhammadan translated the titles for me, and these titles are shown separately, in addition to the English titles.

Q. You think that if such films are shown with the Hindustani titles they will be appreciated better by people all over India?

A. I should say so because they pride themselves on reading and they would spell it out—it would help to teach them to read also.

Q. You show these films free?

A. Yes.

Q. You think they are appreciated? Suppose you charge one pice or two pice, don't you think they will be more appreciated? People do not care to see what they are shown free.

A. It might be so. My show is a free thing. I don't know what I should do with the money, or how I should collect it.

Q. But would they care to come and see your films if you show them free?

A. Oh, yes, the theatres, where I have shown them, were always full, absolutely packed.

*Chairman:* You have shown them in the theatres also?

A. Yes. At a Meerut theatre, and at Aligarh in the theatre at the fair. In the town in the big Meerut theatre.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* You showed this in America you said just now?

A. I showed them in Ottawa, the capital city of Canada.

Q. Didn't your poultry industry benefit in any way?

A. Oh, yes, because I brought back a great many orders for Asil, or Indian fighting birds, as well as for Indian works of art. And letters are coming every mail asking me to find similar Indian birds to send across the sea.

Q. Then it is very good to show these films in other parts of the Empire?

A. Certainly. I am having orders every mail.

Q. Do you think that if Canada or Australia send such films here they will be appreciated?

A. I should think so, very much by the educated people. Not by the masses as yet.

Q. But suppose these titles are put on them in Hindustani also before they send them here? It would be better if they put on Hindustani titles?

A. I certainly think so. There is one little thing I would like to mention about these public films. I notice that the censorship is very strict, I mean you don't allow bad films in the country when you can help it. But there does not seem to be any censorship over the advertisements and bill heads for these films and only last week in the *Statesman*, there was a most degrading page in the advertisement of a particular picture that was going to be shown in the cinema in Calcutta, appealing to the lowest instincts of the audience. Well, now the films might have passed the censorship and be very charming

films but there is no censorship over these advertisements which are put in the papers.

*Q.* You want censorship?

*A.* Yes.

*Chairman:* It was last week you say?

*A.* It was last week or the week before. You will see these advertisements drawing attention to the film in Calcutta.

*Q.* Do you remember what the film was which was advertised?

*A.* I can't remember the name.

*Mr. Green:* We had the same representation in Bombay. It is one of the questions in our questionnaire.

*A.* Well, I just thought I would like to mention it. I wondered whether the advertisements relating to these films were being properly censored.

*Chairman:* You don't refer to the posters, but to advertisements in the newspapers. Are you able to remember what that film was which was advertised?

*A.* I tried to look it up but I am afraid my paper has been destroyed. I think it was bathing scenes on the coast of America. It was not at all an attractive advertisement for the film and I think it was deliberately appealing to the lower instincts of people.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* In which part of Lucknow is your farm?

*A.* It is out at Dilkusha. I think you might care to come and see it.

*Q.* Well, if we find the time we will try and come.

*A.* Yes, please do. I am going to Calcutta to-morrow morning to a big poultry show for All-India there, and I shall be away, but my manager will be at the farm and he will show you everything.

### **Oral Evidence of Mr. C. R. PETERS, Superintendent of Police, Lucknow, on Tuesday, the 6th December 1927.**

*Chairman:* I understand, Mr. Peters, you are the Superintendent of Police in Lucknow?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* How long have you been here?

*A.* About two years.

*Q.* Do you detail any policeman or officer to look after the cinema shows here? Is there any man put on special duty?

*A.* Do you mean from the point of view of watching films?

*Q.* And the posters and advertisements?

*A.* No, nobody is specially detailed for that. But I go myself, I should say, twice a week. I see almost everything that comes here.

*Q.* Had you at any time to take action against any film, that is to say, to call the attention of the District Magistrate to any objectionable films in your time?

*A.* No. We had a notice about one once in Calcutta which was received very late, after the thing had left Lucknow. I have never taken any action.

*Q.* Do you know whether any action was taken at all?

*A.* I know that one film came here—"The Ten Commandments"—from here it went to Delhi and I know they banned it in Delhi although it was shown here. It went immediately from here to Delhi. That is the only case I can remember in which censorship has been exercised by anybody against a film which has been shown in Lucknow.

*Q.* But has your District Magistrate here in your province ever done it?

*A.* Not in my time.

*Q.* And how long have you been in the province?

A. This is my 21st year.

Q. You don't recollect in your experience any action by any district magistrate?

A. No.

Q. How many cinemas are there here in Lucknow?

A. Well, they are really four. Two are public, one belongs to the Young Men's Christian Association and one to the 4th Hussars. The Prince of Wales and the Elphinstone are the public ones. The 4th Hussars' one is for the troops. Then there was another one called the Star which started and I think it went bankrupt.

Q. Have you got a list of the cinemas in your province? Who is likely to have that?

A. I couldn't tell you that. I don't know if the Inspector General's office would have it. They might.

Q. Is the Inspector General's office here in Lucknow or in Allahabad?

A. In Allahabad. The Secretariat officers are usually here, but at present they are in Allahabad for six weeks. The Chief Secretary's office might be able to give you a list.

Q. So from your experience you are apparently satisfied with the censorship?

A. No. I don't think I am. I am not satisfied with the censorship as it exists.

Q. What is it you are not satisfied with?

A. I consider there are certain types of films which are exhibited which should not be exhibited—in Lucknow anyway.—I don't know about other places,—judging from the way in which they are received. I am now talking about the Elphinstone which is just close here. I dare say you have seen it. It is about 100 yards away—here in the Kaiserbagh practically. That is visited entirely by Indians and the other place is in Hazratganj and is visited mostly by troops and by Europeans. Well, there are some sort of films—which touch on sexual questions—which from some of the remarks and so forth one hears from the people down below, are not such as should be exhibited,—at least that is my opinion.

Q. You mean your view point is that it should be shown in the cantonment area, not in the city?

A. I don't say that, but I think the point of view from which the audience I have mentioned regards women is entirely different.

Q. You mean it is not objectionable from a moral point of view?

A. Well, if you understand the manners and customs of the people, it might not be objectionable but if you don't it certainly is objectionable.

Q. Your objection is that there are no objections from the moral point of view but because people look at it from a different standpoint.

A. Yes, that is so, generally speaking.

Q. I mean, so far as morality is concerned, it is common to all human beings. So that it is not a question of morals, it is a question of difference in outlook.

A. It is a question of—it is very difficult to explain. (We are probably backward in Lucknow but in Lucknow—I am talking of the ordinary Indian, I am not talking of the advanced or educated Indian)—the ordinary Indian who goes to the Elphinstone in Lucknow has this view of women, that a woman who unveils her face is possibly a loose character,—and if you start with that as a fundamental fact you can understand how wrong their reading of the film may be.

Q. But do they not gather that impression from seeing women themselves, their short skirts? What impression is to be gained by these people?

A. Well, you don't hear the remarks in the bulk. You don't hear the remarks that may be made. Here in the Elphinstone, if you see one of these

films, you hear them. The management very often stop and turn on the light owing to the remarks. The manager will tell you more about that.

*Q.* How are you to avoid that? You cannot have a film certified for one audience and not for another audience.

*A.* Well, I don't know. I think your board of censors should consist of people who regarded these things from all points of view.

*Q.* So that it would have the effect of shutting them out even from European audiences?

*A.* Certainly, there are certain types of film that should be. There is one on at the Prince of Wales to-night.

*Q.* Is it "The Merry Widow"?

*A.* I think that could very easily have been shut out from anybody. I mean, not only from Indians but from Europeans too.

*Q.* That point of view we understand. But the difficulty is when you want to make a distinction between one place and another.

*A.* Well, the distinction is that there are certain things which a European would understand to mean one thing and an Indian another.

*Q.* Therefore you would have to stop it altogether from the country?

*A.* I think you should be very much more strict in the things you allow of that type.

*Q.* But how is it that in your province no action was taken at all? No complaint was made till this committee was appointed. How is it you are waking up to it only now?

*A.* Well, I don't think people, officials or anybody, had realised that it was up to them to make a complaint.

*Mr. Green:* The District Magistrate can suspend a film at a moment's notice.

*A.* Well, the District Magistrate may not have the same views as another district magistrate may have.

*Chairman:* That is the difficulty. Probably another Superintendent of Police may not take the same view.

*A.* Quite possibly. I am merely giving you my views.

*Q.* The difficulty is that so long as it is not based on any moral grounds the difficulty is of finding a workable rule. The capacity of an audience to understand, of course, varies from place to place, even in England, and if you take it to a remote part, it may be misunderstood.

*A.* But if you put it the other way round,—supposing you had an Indian film shown in England in which woman was displayed in a light which the English people might not understand, say, depicting Indian women as European women appear to Indians, something would be done.

*Q.* The difficulty is—what is it you have in mind? Have you the kissing scenes in mind?

*A.* Well, not only that, but the whole of western life is put on a very low plane; and it isn't so.

*Q.* But I dare say you see the "Tatler" and "Sketch."

*A.* The point is that the illiterate people who go to the cinema don't see these things. The effect of the cinema is on the masses. People pay two or four annas and see these things and they judge western civilisation accordingly.

*Q.* Although they may be true to life?

*A.* Well, that is the point. They magnify certain aspects of life which exist in American ideas but do not exist in England. At least to a small extent it may. But you get all these night club scenes which are very much exaggerated.

*Q.* Have you seen many British films? Are they free from those defects?

*A.* I cannot tell you offhand.

**Q.** I mean there is more censoring about British films than about American films. I quite understand that the masses will not understand western life.

**A.** Well, I think Indians are extraordinarily quick to appreciate and to understand, considering the things are in English and they don't understand a word of the subject matter which is printed; they don't understand a word and yet they understand the thing from the pictures extraordinarily well, although it is depicted in another country altogether. Therefore you have to be very careful what you show; because you may be giving them ideas about the world which are not true ideas.

**Q.** But no stage is supposed to represent true life.

**A.** Oh, I don't know that. It is the essence of good acting. The stage is where true life should be exhibited.

**Q.** But do you think it will attract if there is not some exaggeration?

**A.** Yes, but don't exaggerate some of the bad points. Exaggerate some of the good ones. In the type of films I am referring to, too much stress is laid on the bad things.

**Q.** You think there should be tighter censorship?

**A.** I think there should be very much tighter censorship and I think the censorship should be applicable to all, and one in which all views, eastern, western, Muhamadan and Hindu, should be fully represented. And it should be uniform in all cases.

**Q.** But the trouble is there has not been any complaint in your province. No action has been taken under the powers of the law as it is, and perhaps, but for the appointment of this committee, we should have heard nothing.

**A.** Yes, but there are many things which go on which people put up with.

**Q.** But doesn't it rather show that it is possible to take an exaggerated view of the facts? Because when you responsible people on the spot have said nothing.

**A.** But I have only been here two years and the cinema only recently came to the fore in India, during the last three or four years.

**Q.** But somebody holding your responsible position, if really there was anything wrong in it, would have adverted to it in an official report or something of the kind. It is a matter more of individual taste.

**A.** It is a matter more of politics than of administration.

**Q.** But don't you think the real remedy is to educate the people in these things?

**A.** You are educating the wrong way round by a thing which is the quickest method of education. If you give them films which will educate them, by all means.

**Q.** Are Indian films popular with the people?

**A.** There are three or four. One about Lord Buddha, and one called "Pati Bhakti"—that is very popular. There are about four. But apart from those they would very much prefer American.

**Q.** So you don't think the real remedy is to produce more Indian films?

**A.** I think so, if you can produce good ones. You can also produce things in the nature of Pathé Gazette, Indian things like *melas* at Benares and Hardwar. I think they will be liked by the people.

**Q.** So the real remedy is in more production of really attractive films. After all, these poor people go there for amusement. Give them healthier amusement in the shape of their own surroundings. You think the Government should embark upon encouraging such things?

**A.** I think so, for Indians. I think it would be a very good thing.

**Q.** Have you anything to say about crimes?

**A.** Yes, I think a certain type of film does rather affect crime. A lot of these crime films are full of revolvers, people being shot down and so on, robbery, burglary,—this sort of thing rather has a bad effect.

**Q.** To be frank with you, when we hear Englishmen complaining of American things there is a sort of suspicion.

**A.** Call them English if you like. I do not mind. Wherever they come from, whether American or English, I should say western films.

**Q.** Almost all the entire show is American now?

**A.** Yes. Anyway call them western films.

**Q.** We seldom pause to think whether it is American, British, French or and so on. Very few pause to think about it. In other provinces we had the police officers before us. They told us distinctly that they cannot trace any crime to the cinema.

**A.** I remember one case which was quoted years ago in the *Pioneer*, and it happened on the frontier, in which a gang of Pathans held up a train. I do not know if it has been quoted to you.

**Q.** We enquired into it. It was a wash-out. Another wash-out was this, that the abduction of Mrs. Ellis was due to the cinema.

**A.** Here is a case, it is only a minor thing, of a small boy in Benares which happened a few days ago. (Reads.) The boy said he picked up the idea from the cinema.

**Q.** He pleaded it?

**A.** Apparently so.

**Q.** He thought it would be an excuse, a palliative circumstance?

**A.** I cannot tell you. I have not cross-examined him. That was the report to me. Then there is this Peshawar case.

**Q.** We enquired into it on the spot and there was not much in it.

**A.** That is the only case I can remember. I have had cases here not of crimes but of criminals going to cinemas who have been captured and in statements made by them afterwards they said they spend some money on cinema going.....

**Q.** They are as much entitled to go to a cinema as any of us?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Popular impressions are liable to be exaggerated. You cannot tell us definitely of any case which you investigated?

**A.** No.

**Q.** That would be more valuable. What is this case which Mr. Ashworth referred to? (Shown.)

**A.** That was in Mirzapore. That was recently, about 3 or 4 months ago. The report of that case is not in my office; it would be in Mirzapore. It is reported in the *Pioneer*.

**Sir Haroon Jaffer:** You go twice a week to the cinemas?

**A.** Yes. In the hot weather certainly; there is nothing else to do.

**Q.** Have you seen any uncertified films exhibited there?

**A.** No.

**Q.** Or any uncensored films?

**A.** No.

**Q.** Do you always watch the certificates?

**A.** It is always there. I do not look for it particularly.

**Q.** You make it a point to do so?

**A.** I do not consider it one of my duties to do so, but I have always noticed it, any way.

**Q.** How are the films which are passed or prohibited by other provincial boards notified to you?

**A.** I think it goes to the district magistrate and a copy comes to me. Now there is a recent amendment that we have to notify the proprietor of the cinema.....

**Q.** You get this information after the whole thing is over?



A. Formerly it came with some delay. It has happened in my experience in one particular case in which we got the notification regarding the film being banned or the show being stopped long after the thing had left Lucknow.

Q. You think it should be expedited?

A. I think so. We should all be informed. I do not know what the procedure is now, if each Local Government is notified. Any way, we should be notified straightaway.

Q. There is a complaint that the district magistrate does not exercise any systematic supervision over the exhibition of films. Is it true?

A. You ought to ask the District Magistrate.

Q. Does he go to the cinema?

A. Yes.

Q. Just as you go?

A. Yes. He goes very often. One of my Inspectors is officially deputed by me twice a week. He goes there on Wednesdays and Saturdays which are the most popular days.

Q. If these kissing, dancing, and crime scenes are removed, do you think the cinemmas will still be patronised?

A. Oh, yes. There are no more popular films with Indians as well as with Europeans than Douglas Fairbanks things.

Q. The people teach themselves self-defence by seeing these things?

A. I do not know that; but they admire any feats of skill and so forth.

Q. There are sudden attacks and they show defence, so that they are good pictures for Indians?

A. I do not know from that point of view. I have seen them, but I have not learnt much self-defence from them. But you admire the exhibition of skill.....

Q. You must be going to the Y.M.C.A. cinema?

A. I have not been there.

Q. It is for the troops?

A. Yes, for all troops in the cantonment, both Indian and British.

Q. It is a private one or is it run as a commercial show?

A. I really do not know. The Y.M.C.A. run it.

Q. Do they sell tickets?

A. I cannot tell you. I do not go there.

Q. They may be showing uncertified films. You ought to see them too.

A. May be, but I cannot tell you.

Q. Is it a licensed house?

A. I presume so. I could not tell you.

Q. When there is a good picture do you think Madans increase their prices by about 50 per cent.?

A. Madans do not own the two in Lucknow. The Prince of Wales is owned by a man named Bevan.

Q. These exhibitors increase their prices by about 50 per cent when there is a good show?

A. They have done so on very rare occasions.

Q. But they have done so?

A. They have done so twice to my knowledge. Madans only own the Elphinstone Theatre and the other is owned by a man named Mr. Bevan. He gets his film supply from Madans who have got a complete monopoly in Lucknow, which is a very bad thing I think.

A. If these English films are shown with titles in vernaculars also, do you think they will be better appreciated? Supposing we ask the Empire films

to come here, would you advise they should have vernacular titles also on them so that they may be better appreciated here?

A. That would only apply to the Elphinstone where Indians go, because Indians practically hardly go to the Prince of Wales Theatre. I think it would be more appreciated.

Q. They may capture the market here more than the American if you have titles in one or two vernaculars also.

Mr. Green: There are more than one or two vernaculars in India! You told us that "The Ten Commandments" was shown here and it was subsequently banned in Delhi. Do you know why it was banned?

A. I heard indirectly that there was something about Moses there which was considered to be derogatory in some way to the Muhammadans.

Q. Did it cause any trouble here?

A. Not the slightest. It was most popular. It was shown in both places, the Elphinstone and the Prince of Wales, and crowds of people attended it.

Q. I am rather ignorant about the population of this place.

A. It is largely Muhammadan. This is the centre of Muhammadanism in Northern India, really even more so than Delhi. This is the stronghold of the Shias.

Chairman: I saw "The Ten Commandments" and I did not see anything objectionable in it.

Colonel Crawford: They did not like any prophet being represented by an ordinary man, just as some of us object to Christ being so shown.

A. It did not strike anybody here.

Mr. Green: About sexual films you told us that unpleasant remarks are made, or so you thought. What kind of people is it who make them?

A. If you were a Hindustani scholar you would understand it.

Q. Is it the film that brings out the vice that is in them or what? What I am trying to find out is, is the film doing their morals any harm?

A. Their morals probably are not already there—the sort of persons who make these remarks. There are a certain number of Indian ladies there and these remarks are most offensive. I have had complaints about that.

Q. Have you ever heard of similar phenomena in western countries?

A. Not in the same general way.

Q. You told us that the District Magistrate and the Inspector visited the films.

A. I do not want to convey a wrong impression. The District Magistrate and I both go from the point of view of pleasure. This Inspector is deputed not from the point of view of censorship so much as from the point of view of traffic really. He attends and if there was anything that I had not seen which he considered to be improper or anything like that, he would bring it to my notice.

Q. If you held really strong views about any particular film I take it you would report it to the District Magistrate?

A. Yes. I have done so in the case of one play on one occasion, not a film.

Q. When you told us you saw the certificate, you meant the trailer certificate?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you ever inspect the actual certificate?

A. No.

Q. A suggestion has been made that inasmuch as all the censor boards make a special mark on films from which anything has been exercised—it is usually a triangle in one corner—it might be advisable for some officer to inspect the actual certificate. The actual certificate bears on the reverse an endorsement showing exactly what has been cut out. This would enable the local officers to see that none of that stuff had been put back.

A. Who is going to do that? The District Magistrate has already enough to do.

Q. He works with and through the police?

A. As a matter of fact, all these things come to us.

Q. I was wondering whether you would welcome as a safeguard a provision being made that whenever the trailer certificate bears that mark the actual certificate should be seen?

A. I can easily arrange for that. If it was made a rule it could quite easily be carried out here. We can arrange for it in the same way as we see the synopsis of all plays.

Q. Or dramatic plays?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you see the synopsis of films?

A. We do not. I dare say if we insisted under the Act we probably could, but we do not do it.

Mr. Neogy: I will draw your attention to the observations made by the United Provinces Government on the question of the control that is exercised by the authorities over the exhibition of these pictures. They say, "It has been made clear that District Magistrates exercise no systematic supervision over the exhibition of films. They rely mainly on the Police and the methods adopted by the Police for the purpose of ensuring that no uncertified or improper films are exhibited vary greatly." Later on they say, "The result is that the powers given to the District Magistrates and the Local Governments under the Cinematograph Act, which are otherwise quite adequate, remain unexercised to a large extent and films which may have a certificate of the Board of Censors but are unsuitable for exhibition in any particular locality, evade the notice of the local authorities and are not reported to the Local Government for prohibition." From what you have stated it seems that you do exercise some control?

A. I exercise it not because I have been officially ordered to do so, but simply because I happen to go to the cinema.

Q. This letter is dated March 1924. Do I take it that matters have improved since? You have been here only for two years?

A. This probably was not written directly about Lucknow but about the whole province. That I cannot say. I know that my predecessor used to go to the cinema fairly often.

Q. You are simply continuing the practice of your predecessors in this matter?

A. I cannot say. My immediate predecessor used to go to the cinema fairly often. It is not laid down as part of my official duties.

Q. You have made certain complaints about certain classes of films, and from what the Local Government state it appears that they think that the powers under the Act are adequate only if the local officers take a little more care in controlling the shows.

A. They have not said so to the local officers. They may have said so in this letter. I have not received any instructions on that.

Q. So that your complaint could be very easily remedied by the District Magistrate taking action under the Cinematograph Act?

A. Then again you come to the question of what I have mentioned before, namely, you will have to have some standard for the District Magistrate to act upon. It is no good saying "I consider this is improper".

Q. There must be a standard for anybody to act upon.

A. If the Board of Censors is sufficiently strict in the first place you eliminate the necessity for your District Magistrate having to do anything.

Q. Supposing there is one uniform standard for the whole of India, they will have to take into consideration the circumstances in fairly advanced places like the cities of Bombay, Calcutta, and so on.

A. Yes.

*Q.* And therefore if they are to have a uniform standard for the whole of India, they will have to adopt a standard that will suit a city like Bombay, and a hamlet in the frontiers of India?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* And any such uniniformity might be undesirable from your point of view?

*A.* Then it will be up to your Local Government to set up a standard for that particular province. The United Provinces is a more or less homogeneous province.

*Q.* There again, the ideas about purdah and things of that kind in Lucknow may differ from those, say, in Allahabad?

*A.* No. I do not think so.

*Q.* You particularly emphasised Lucknow.

*A.* Because I come from Lucknow.

*Q.* May I take it that your experience is that so far as the United Provinces is concerned, you could have one uniform standard?

*A.* I think so, and it would be a very different standard from Bombay or Calcutta.

*Q.* In that case would you advocate the establishment of provincial boards of censors?

*A.* No. On the Central Board of Censors surely you will have Indians who are sufficiently conversant with the whole of India.

*Q.* You would then be imposing the United Provinces standard on Bombay and Calcutta which you admit are very much more advanced.

*A.* You could have a representative of the Local Government who could examine the film, you could have an agent deputed in each province.....

*Mr. Green:* That agent would have to see every single film because any film might come to the United Provinces?

*A.* Yes. In any case the Board of Censors have got to see everything.

*Q.* No. It has paid officials to see. They only refer to the Board any case of doubt.

*A.* What is the present system?

*Q.* In Bombay and Calcutta the Boards consist of 6 or 7 members. They have a paid staff who conduct the primary examination. If they have any doubt, they refer the matter to a sub-committee.

*A.* I think certainly each province should have a paid official to do similarly in that province. Each province should have someone to examine films having regard to local conditions. I would not say a board, I think you ought to have a central board with a delegate in each province if you say that the Central Board cannot examine things with a view to seeing how they will suit each province.

*Mr. Neogy:* This delegate will have to be stationed permanently at that place?

*A.* Yes.

*Mr. Green:* If you have a delegate from the Central Board in each province, the United Provinces delegate, say, may object to a film which others had accepted.

*A.* I may take it your representative is acting on behalf of the Local Government.

*Chairman:* Do purdah ladies visit the cinemas here?

*A.* Yes.

*Mr. Neogy:* Have you recently been to England?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Do you go to the cinemas there while you are there?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Are you aware that a very large percentage, say, about 90 per cent., of the films shown there are American?

A. I am not aware of it but I am prepared to take your word for it.

Q. You said in some of these American films certain aspects of life are exaggerated to an undesirable extent?

A. Yes.

Q. And to that extent they could be said to misrepresent western civilisation? Have you heard any such complaint while in England about these American films from Englishmen?

A. Yes, certainly—these things, hold ups, some people looting trains, the sort of things you see in "The Merry Widow" if you have seen that film.....

Q. They object to this class.

A. When you say they, one does not go about listening to complaints about this sort of thing. But the objection is equally valid there.

Q. I suppose the objection is confined to a particular class of people more or less, because otherwise these films could not have been shown there; exhibitors would not have found it profitable to show them.

Chairman: They have to be passed by the British Board of Censors.

Mr. Green: I may go further and cite American opinion itself. Mr. Secretary Hughes is reported to have said that American films were frequently used in foreign countries to give false impressions of American life. (Reads.)

Mr. Neogy: Opinion must differ on these points. You cannot expect everybody to share your view. I do not suppose there is any unanimity of opinion even in England. It is not a case of the westerner being misrepresented to the easterner. In England, it is a case of Englishmen being misrepresented in England and why do the Englishmen patronise these shows?

A. It probably gives a certain amount of amusement to see themselves misrepresented.

Q. You have said something about the monopoly enjoyed by Madans in Lucknow. In what way does it prejudicially affect people?

A. I have seen very little audience sometimes in the Prince of Wales theatre and when I asked the reason why, the manager said he has to have his films from Madan under some block system and from nobody else.

Q. Is he not free to take films from any other source?

A. No. I hear Madans have got the monopoly for the whole of India.

Chairman: No, not for the whole of India, but for certain pictures.

Mr. Neogy: Are there any liquor bars attached to any of these cinemas?

A. Yes, these two any way, the Prince of Wales and the Elphinstone.

Q. What effect do you think they have upon the people, Indians particularly? Are they very desirable?

A. Candidly, I think they are not. I think they are very undesirable from the Indian point of view.

Q. And from the Indian point of view it may be far more desirable to have the bars removed than to shut out certain classes of pictures?

A. That I do not know.

**Oral Evidence of Dr. RADHAKUMUD MOOKERJI, M.A., P.R.S.,  
Ph.D., Professor and Head of the Department of Indian History,  
Lucknow University, on Tuesday, the 6th December 1927.**

Chairman: Dr. Mookerji, you are Professor of Indian History in the Lucknow University?

A. Yes, Sir.

Q. How long have you been in Lucknow?

A. Since the establishment of the University in 1921.

Q. Before that you were in Calcutta?

A. No, at the University of Mysore.

Q. Now, I suppose you go to the cinema often?

A. I cannot say "often" but occasionally, about 2 to 4 times a month, and that on receiving reports about good films from friends.

Q. You are on the look out for good films?

A. Yes.

Q. How do you make out good films, what is your estimate of good films?

A. First of all I depend on reports of friends, then I of course examine them for myself.

Q. Have you any partiality for any particular actor or actress?

A. Yes, generally when I am looking for amusement I go to see Charlie Chaplin and Jackie Coogan.

Q. Then where do you, to which theatre do you go?

A. I generally go to the Prince of Wales.

Q. What is the audience generally in the Prince of Wales?

A. Probably equally divided between Indians and Europeans.

Q. Indians of the educated classes?

A. Yes, only of the educated classes and some of my students. But of course I am dealing with graduates here.

Q. I suppose these shows are more or less comic, I mean shows with Charlie Chaplin?

A. But generally I have found that in some performances there is a moral purpose too, which is not very apparent but still it is there. At least I did not find any performance disagreeable from the moral standpoint.

Q. You did not find anything which was objectionable to the students or likely to have a bad effect on the students?

A. I have already told you the classes of students with whom I am dealing are gentlemen at large and they are married men. I don't think there is any bad effect produced upon them.

Q. You found nothing objectionable in the pictures which you saw?

A. Of course when I first began seeing these pictures some scenes appeared to me rather strange to Indian taste.

Q. But gradually you have become.....

A. Gradually I have become modernised.

Q. You began to understand their true bearing?

A. Yes, and I think they are pictures of real life and reality must always appeal. I found also that even when they were scenes of Western life they had a universal appeal to human nature which could not be missed; and because the acting was on a very high level it would also have a very good effect on the taste of the people.

Q. On the whole you think the educative effect and the informative effect of the cinema is good?

A. Yes, and I don't think the time has yet come, from my own point of view, for any kind of strict censorship. I think the censorship that is now in force is quite good, because the cinema itself is a new institution in India and I don't think people are yet taking to it as much as they are doing in other countries. It is not yet time to restrict its free development in India.

Q. You mean too much censorship might kill the trade?

A. It might kill its popularity. It is just now getting popular with the English-educated literate classes, and as regards the illiterate masses, sometimes they get guides with them to give them interpretations of the films. But the cinema has got to be made more popular.

Q. You think the censorship which is now being carried on quite sufficient?

A. Yes, I think the present censorship quite adequate and there is no reason to think it is unsatisfactory.

**Q.** You have seen I suppose some love scenes also in these western films, such as kissing and other things?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** You would not omit those scenes?

**A.** At first I thought that some of the details might have been omitted but later on I felt that the sense of reality would be somewhat affected.

**Q.** The film itself would lose its value?

**A.** And, after all, the cinema is more for amusement than for education, and people pay for amusement.

**Q.** And have you seen any Indian films?

**A.** Yes, but I am sorry to say that I am disappointed. I don't think the performance did adequate justice to the episodes dealt with. I saw "The Light of Asia." I think it did not do full justice at all to the dignity and the gravity of the subject dealt with and it might perhaps offend religious susceptibilities, if I may say so.

**Q.** I believe the Buddhists did take exception to it in Burma,—it was not shown there.

**A.** It is objectionable to Hindus also who think that the Buddha was an incarnation, and, from that point of view, it might almost appear to be sacrilege.

**Q.** What particularly is in your mind?

**A.** The atmosphere was not quite real and modern ideas were too much in evidence. In fact, special care is needed to give adequate treatment to such films. In this connection I would like to say something with reference to question 6. Your question is whether films of Indian life would be more popular with Indian audiences than the prevalent Western films. Now if by Indian audiences you mean the cultivated English-educated audiences, then of course Western films would be more popular; but so far as the masses are concerned, you have to cater more for them. The English-educated classes would certainly like Western films more than the present available Indian films.

**Mr. Green :** Supposing really good Indian films are produced, would the literate English-educated classes still prefer Western films?

**A.** If the Indian film is exactly on the same level of achievement as its Western counterpart, then certainly, the subject matter being Indian, it would appeal more to all Indian audiences; but I don't think it is quite possible now.

**Chairman :** You mean Indian films are defective both in conception and technique?

**A.** Yes, because it means specialised work in the field, that is to say, the sources of history must be properly investigated and the subjects to be dealt with must be properly presented. You want the work of the historian to give the material for the cinema industry.

**Q.** You mean for the writing up of the story and the scenario?

**A.** It must be done by specialists.

**Q.** Those who are acquainted with the subject in some detail?

**A.** Not only that, but there are some episodes which might be selected for film treatment and it is the business of historians, under Government encouragement or arrangement, to furnish the literature specially meant for film treatment.

**Q.** For film story writing you think there should be experts?

**A.** Yes. If your intention is to do what you can to develop the Indian film industry, then you must proceed about the business in a thoroughly scientific manner. That is to say, the films presented must be properly got up; they must adhere to historical accuracy. After all, the cinema must be regarded as an instrument of education and there should not be any false ideals or wrong views circulated.

**Q.** And for that purpose what do you suggest?

**A.** I suggest that the Government should make some arrangement by which the necessary literature should be forthcoming. The Archaeological Department might help, but just now they are more busy with the collection of material than with the writing of history on the basis of the material. But there are historians in the country who might be deputed for the purpose.

**Q.** To write short stories suitable for the purpose?

**A.** I may give you an instance. I hope you will forgive me for referring to a personal matter but here is a book just out in the "Rulers of India" series on Harsha, written by me. He was one of the greatest rulers of India. There are many interesting episodes in the life and work of Harsha which might perhaps lend themselves to film treatment and which might be appreciated all over the world, because there are many elements of universal appeal in the life of this great ruler, and, in that sense, if a really good Indian film is produced it should have a universal currency. There were certain assemblies held by Harsha, assemblies of millions of people, and he was in the habit of giving away his whole fortune in such assemblies once every 5 years. All that lends itself to very picturesque treatment.

**Q.** Yes, my friend, but probably there may be political objections?

**A.** How can there be political objections? In King Harsha's time India was entirely Hindu and there were no Hindu-Muhammadian problems. Similarly as regards the Muhammadan period of Indian history, there are many such episodes fit for film treatment.

**Q.** What I have in mind is this. When you speak of the prosperity of ancient India and the present economic condition and all that, there may be politicians of some schools of thought who may raise objections even to that?

**A.** In that case you will have to taboo history. I don't think you ought to go so far as to consider what effect it will have on sensitive people. We must stand up for truth and trustworthy history. History is rich in material for film treatment.

**Q.** And you have specialised on that subject? You have written a book on Ancient Shipping?

**A.** Yes; and one on Asoka is just coming out. H. G. Wells thinks he was the greatest ruler in the world, and if that is so there are many passages in his life which ought to be useful not only to India but to humanity as a whole. So in that way India might contribute something . . .

**Q.** To healthy film literature?

**A.** Yes. It should not be considered as only Indian but its scope should be very wide.

**Q.** You think then that Government effort is needed in that direction? You think private effort cannot cope with it? Supposing you wrote good film stories based on your knowledge of certain things, do you think there will be a market for them among producers, will they take your stories?

**A.** As I told you at the beginning, if the level of treatment is high compared with Western standards, I do not see why for the sake of subject-matter the film should suffer. On the contrary there is much to gain.

**Q.** My point is this: can you leave it to private enterprise to tap these sources of history?

**A.** I don't think so, situated as we are. First of all the Government might utilise the instrument of the cinema for their own educational purposes, and if they encourage the production of necessary literature, private industry might step in as regards technique.

**Q.** I am unaware of the present programme of studies in our schools. Does ancient history of India form part of the curriculum?

**A.** When I first came out to the Lucknow University, I was asked to found a school of ancient Indian history here. I may say that in all Colleges North of the Vindhyas, Indian history at the time, was being studied from 1000 A.D.



Now the whole of Indian history has been restored in the curriculum of study in Allahabad and Lucknow, but Nagpur and other universities are still lagging behind.

**Q.** So that ancient Indian history does form part of your high school and colleges courses?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Do you think the film will be of use in that direction, the production of films I mean?

**A.** Provided it is done with accuracy. If you think of schools and colleges you must always have the idea of accuracy before you; but if you have amusement in view then we may select such episodes as may not be very necessary for the historical student but might be necessary for mass education.

**Q.** So there are both aspects of its value to be considered?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** And do you believe if you had classes for training in scenario writing, college students would take to them?

**A.** I do not think college students will be quite capable of producing stories but I think the teachers might.

**Q.** In the post graduate stage?

**A.** Yes, in the post-graduate stage; some research scholars might be asked to do it, because the details necessary for film treatment would be available only in out of the way sources—in Pali and Sanskrit—in inscriptions and so on.

**Q.** You are thinking more of the historical portion. What about mythology?

**A.** I mean such concrete details as dress, architecture and buildings of the older times to be depicted. For instance, the Archaeological Department might be asked to lend the use of their monuments at Sanchi or Bharut, so that the scenic effects might be looked after carefully.

**Q.** So the Archaeological Department comes in very largely in this idea of yours?

**A.** Of course. They have thrown open their monuments to public observation and I don't think there will be any objection to the use of these monuments for photographic purposes.

**Q.** I don't suppose they will have any objection?

**A.** But what I wanted to say is that a preliminary scientific study is necessary in order that details of dress, architecture and other necessary things for film production should be absolutely truthful.

**Q.** And made available you mean as a part of literature on which scenario story writers could draw?

**A.** Yes; and illustrations should be given in such books as to the kind of dress and ornaments, etc., that were in vogue at any time.

**Q.** You want a general book of reference for scenario writers?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** You think such an effort should be made by Government?

**A.** Yes, because when I consider Western films, they always show an extraordinary amount of fidelity to the environment represented.

**Q.** When they produce historical films?

**A.** Even ordinary stories from real life or old historical stories like those of the Romans for example, the background is quite real. What I mean to say is that if the Buddha is depicted, he must be depicted as the real Buddha in his actual dress. You should not represent him in any other kind of dress at all.

**Q.** And for that ancient sculpture will be useful?

**A.** Very useful.

**Q.** You want a general book of reference?

**A.** I should like to have a book of Indian history in pictures representing dress, furniture, buildings and other details.

**Q.** How far would you go? Would you include the Muhammadan period?

**A.** Certainly, there are many interesting periods not necessarily communal in character but extremely national.

**Q.** You can avoid communal questions?

**A.** Certainly. For instance, there is the question in regard to Sher Shah which has a national significance, because Sher Shah was a leader of the Afghans and Indians against the Moghuls, and his history, with the fort and surroundings in which he lived, would lend itself beautifully to film treatment.

**Q.** But do you think the Mussulmans won't have any objection to that?

**A.** No, I don't think they will.

**Q.** Anyway, what you want seems to be work which requires some careful study by a scholar or more than one scholar, and it will be a valuable mine of information?

**A.** If it is held that the Government should do something for the development of the Indian film industry, then I should say the part to be played by Government is this preliminary part, the creation of proper literature.

**Q.** Both for educational purposes?

**A.** As well as for industrial purposes, and then the private industry in films will . . .

**Q.** Will draw upon it? And do you think that some special classes for the technique of photography and other things may be opened for the purpose of encouraging the film industry?

**A.** In connection with the technical industries of the country, but not in connection with the high class institutes. In Bangalore, for instance, they devote themselves to research, but there are many technical institutions of the second grade type where these classes should be opened.

**Q.** And also for direction and training people in acting,—direction and such other things connected with films?

**A.** That perhaps will require a separate school. There are many schools of art in the United Provinces. We have a very fine school of arts and crafts at Lucknow where indigenous designs are being specially cultivated and fostered.

**Q.** In what direction?

**A.** Indian artistic designs are applied to modern handicrafts. The idea is that if you must use a tumbler, for instance, the tumbler should bear an indigenous design.

**Q.** But how will the school of art be able to help in the film industry?

**A.** About 3 days back they had a performance of a very novel kind here. I am sorry you were not here to witness it. They utilised indigenous ideas of decoration in screens; they used lavishly the old Indian decorative designs on screens, furniture, dress, etc.

**Q.** Who took part in that?

**A.** The principal of the School of Art. He himself acted.

**Q.** Who else?

**A.** The headmaster of the school, the teachers and some students also.

**Q.** Do you think there is latent capacity in the Indian for film acting?

**A.** I believe there is a good deal of indigenous talent available now for the purpose of films, but it is not organised.

**Q.** If it were properly organised you think latent capacity can be called forth?

**A.** Yes, because I take my stand on the experience of the theatres. Just now in Calcutta there are many educated youths who have taken to acting as a profession and they have succeeded remarkably well.

**Q.** Do they come from good families?

**A.** There are M.A.'s among them.

**Q.** What about actresses?

**A.** They are also joining these youths from the gentleman class on equal terms and they are also very highly paid and highly appreciated. But I don't have much knowledge of their inner life, though I should think that as actors or as actresses they are worthy of recognition.

**Q.** Well it all depends on how the public treat them?

**A.** They behave with perfect dignity on the stage and I think our interest ends there and we should not think of any extraneous circumstances.

**Q.** Respectable people, you mean to say, in Bengal do not hesitate to act with those actresses?

**A.** This has been a very recent growth, probably the growth of the last 5 years. Probably Mr. Neogy will know better, but this opens up a new career for this kind of talent.

**Q.** Would you advocate scholarships being instituted for the students to go abroad and study the technique of the art?

**A.** Certainly, because this opens up a new career for the youths of our country.

**Q.** And in your opinion Indian films are getting more and more popular, although they may be defective?

**A.** You mean Indian produced films dealing with Indian subjects?

**Q.** Yes?

**A.** Unfortunately the educated classes are not appreciating that.

**Q.** But do the masses appreciate such things?

**A.** Yes, because they have nothing else to go to. They must have some form of amusement. Probably they would have employed their time in a worse manner.

**Q.** Is there anything else you wish to say?

**A.** With regard to your question No. 18, I should think that Government might adopt the quota system in respect of Indian films. You might make a beginning in this manner by compelling the established firms to provide for a quota, subject to the safeguard that the films to be shown should be certified as passable, not merely as regards the subject matter but also as regards their artistic excellence. I think you should make a beginning by proposing a 2½ per cent. or 5 per cent. quota so far as Indian films are concerned. My reason is this. When we see the western performances of the highest artistic level, we think they appeal universally to human nature.

**Q.** What do you think of the nudity films being exposed?

**A.** They are not generally exposed.

**Q.** Some parts are shown, is it not?

**A.** The educated classes in India are used to these things.

**Q.** What do you mean by the educated classes?

**A.** I mean those who are reading fiction; and others are seeing on the screen what they are reading in the books.

**Q.** What you read in the books is perhaps different from what you see on the screen, I mean persons actually hugging, deep kissing and things of that sort?

**A.** I have not seen such instances.

(The Chairman showed a poster to the witness at this stage and asked him what he thought of it.)

**A.** I think it is more for mirth. I don't think it has any influence on character.

**Q.** Do you think it is worth while encouraging that sort of thing for the impressionable youths?

**A.** I don't think that graduates should be classed as such.

**Q.** Take undergraduates between the ages of 16 and 20, that is just the age when they are trying to become precocious?

A. I should like to know what is the practice followed in England. I don't think India should have a separate set of rules for her youths. My own view is that the same standard which exists in England in this respect should be adopted in India as well.

Q. Don't you think that our boys and girls are not accustomed to the same freedom of intercourse between the sexes as exists in western countries? Take, for instance, the purdah system in the United Provinces. It is almost universally observed on this side. We in the south have the advantages of seeing women, but here you cannot see them?

A. But I don't think that what they see in the films is something curious to them.

Q. Don't you think it will rouse their curiosity and they will try to practise what they see on the screen?

A. My experience is that the time is not yet ripe for making any change. I cannot claim a very wide acquaintance with films.

Q. You think such scenes as I showed you just now can be allowed to be shown on the screen?

A. I think those who have produced them might be better advised, and if that film has passed the censorship in any country, I don't see why it should be censored here. I don't see why India should be separately treated.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer*: Would you allow such a poster to be distributed among your students in your college?

A. If it does any harm I won't allow it.

Q. To those who do not go to the cinemas it might do some harm?

*Chairman*: In a country like ours where early widowhood is so common, if you show the life of a merry widow like that, you think it will do no harm?

A. Widows do not go to the cinemas. I don't think you can expect the widows to frequent the cinemas.

Q. You cannot prevent them from going?

A. I agree that it would be better taste if these things were not shown at all by any country, but since they stand as they are, I don't think India should be treated separately in this matter.

Q. The producer looks to his pocket, and he thinks it will attract a larger audience by that sort of thing.

A. If there is any kind of international censorship, that is understandable, but I don't think India should alone have a separate form of censorship in this matter, particularly when the film industry is still in its infancy and it has not yet spread sufficiently in the country.

Q. Is there anything else that you wish to say?

A. I have already pointed out that there are certain films which are very popular with the public on account of their moral significance. I can point to "Beau Geste" as depicting the ideal of brotherly affection. Thus here there can be no difference between the east and west. There is another film called "The Father" which depicts the ideal of a father. I understand there is a film on relativity. So the Government might be induced to have these films for educational purposes.

Q. Do you mean that the Government of India might have a library of films in which they can stock educational films from foreign countries which are of use here and use them as part of educational propaganda and part of industrial development?

A. Yes.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer*: With regard to your answer to Question No. 20, have you any suggestions to make regarding the source from which Government should meet these expenses?

A. Since I have said that the film industry should be utilised as an educational instrument, the Government should treat it as part of the educational budget, and money should come from the Education Department. Probably the

Department of Industries might also co-operate in this matter with the Education Department.

Q. I suppose you will not suggest any fresh taxation for this purpose?

A. No, because the film industry has not yet sufficiently spread, and if it is taxed at the beginning, it will not flourish in the country at all.

Q. Can't you take the necessary money from the race courses?

A. If you make one amusement to pay for another, then it will be difficult.

Q. So you don't think that races should be taxed for educational purposes?

A. I don't think the meagre sources of amusement should be taxed.

Q. Wherever the races are taxed, you think they should be removed, for instance, in Bombay, Bengal and other places?

A. I don't think that going to races has become so universal a habit with our people that they should be taxed.

Q. You said there is a School of Arts here. I suppose you would prefer a class to be attached to it to teach the cinema industry in all its aspects?

A. Yes, and I would suggest that this useful branch might be added to all technical institutions in the country.

Q. Regarding the films dealing with historical episodes and the conflicts that arise between Hindus and Mussulmans as a result of these historical episodes, what remedies would you suggest to overcome the conflicts?

A. To begin with, we should select those characters which are extremely national in their outlook. There can't be any conflict if the selections are properly made. On the contrary, it will intensify the feeling of nationalism.

Q. Then there will be no danger?

A. Probably it will be a necessary corrective to communal spirit.

Q. You said that some of the educated actors are coming forward . . . ?

A. I meant educated actors who are working with the actresses in the same theatrical establishment.

Q. Now, do these actresses belong to the class of prostitutes?

A. I don't know exactly. They may or may not belong to that class. I have no special knowledge of their life. But what I have seen is this. There have been amateur performances of late in Calcutta where I am told both educated actors and actresses have taken part.

Q. Would you like to introduce legislation prohibiting prostitutes from taking part in the cinema industry in order to attract educated and respectable people to the line?

A. Of course, if we want to produce artistic excellence, I don't think we should begin with limitations like these in the beginning, because it may hamper the industry. But all these evils will disappear as the industry makes sufficient headway.

Q. Do you think that if a Board of Censors were appointed in the United Provinces, men with the necessary qualifications would come forward to work as censors on a small remuneration?

A. I think Honorary Members will be readily forthcoming to serve on the Board.

Q. I suppose you will lend your services to Government too if they are wanted?

A. I don't think there will be any difficulty to get the necessary Honorary Members because we have got so many public bodies which are full of honorary workers.

Q. I suppose it would be a good thing to have a Board of Censors for the United Provinces instead of leaving the matter to be decided by the Superintendent of Police or District Magistrate?

A. Yes, certainly, and there will be any number of public men forthcoming to serve on the Board if one were constituted for the United Provinces.

**Mr. Green :** You say that you could easily get suitable men to serve on the Board of Censors. But do you contemplate having an Advisory Board or a Censor Board?

**A.** I thought there would be an Advisory Board to begin with.

**Q.** I have been very interested in your thoughtful remarks about the historical films. But it has been suggested by at least one witness that they should be banned because they do not suit the Muhammadans. If that view is accepted, don't you think it will be very difficult to get any historical films at all in India?

**A.** I think we are making too much of this difference in outlook. On the contrary, we should insist on improving the methods of education which might correct these excesses.

**Q.** I take it that you would be in favour of the Censor not being too touchy about communal fears, but you would leave it to the executive authorities or the District Magistrate to decide whether a certain film should be suspended if he anticipates a breach of the peace?

**A.** Subject to the advice of the Advisory Board.

**Q.** If he has emergency powers, I suppose you would not have any objection to it?

**A.** Certainly I would leave him some emergency powers in this matter.

**Q.** I was not quite clear why you considered it necessary for Government to come forward and supply, not exactly scenarios, but materials for accurate scenarios. Is it not possible for Indian producing companies to go to experts like yourself and the Archæological Department and get the information on payment?

**A.** It is a question of protection due to an infant industry struggling for its development.

**Q.** Are you aware that in Bombay there are over half a dozen producing companies who make films as fast as they can go, and if those companies pay experts like you, will it not be possible to supply them with scenarios?

**A.** But I don't think they have sufficiently advanced in point of excellence.

**Q.** It is true that they have not gone as far as America or Germany, but we saw one film at least which was very excellent?

**A.** I think they have got very scanty material for their work.

**Q.** Could not a gentleman like you and other experts try their hand without Government assistance and supply them with scenarios or materials?

**A.** I think the educated classes or the teachers would not like to identify themselves with propaganda work outside the field of education.

**Q.** What do you mean by propaganda?

**A.** If the teachers are asked to co-operate in any educational propaganda, they would be perfectly willing to do so, but I don't think they would like to have any direct connection with industries in this manner.

**Q.** Can't you yourself indulge in literary work at present?

**A.** But that literary work is published, whereas in the other case it will be difficult for teachers to write to order.

**Q.** My suggestion is that, from your wealth of historical knowledge, men of your position could suggest suitable scenes?

**A.** If I am asked by a proper authority to do so,—I don't mean by any Government authority,—but by the trade. My point is this. A mere suggestion will not do, because the details have to be worked out with so much scrupulous adherence to accuracy that it will be really a work of scholarship. There should be another set of workers who should dramatise the historical treatment, so that I don't think it is quite easy to find out a teacher who can directly dramatise.

**Q.** Could not some of your students, instead of devoting themselves to scholastic careers, devote their attention to this branch?

A. Of course they will if the business develops, otherwise how will they be absorbed?

Q. The business has already developed considerably in Bombay?

A. Yes, but still it is somewhat too early for our students to think of this new career.

Chairman : Even in Bombay there are plenty of anachronism and inaccuracies in production.

Colonel Crawford : I gathered from your remarks to the Chairman that you considered the western films as shown were depicting real life?

A. What I meant was that the setting and the environment was real. I did not mean that the story was real.

Q. I mean the actual life shown?

A. I meant that the story had reference to actual life.

Q. Now take, for instance, a scene of these Night Clubs. Do you think they show the normal state of life?

A. No doubt there are exaggerations in the treatment, but what I meant was this. Just as an English novel may be regarded as a mirror of contemporary social life, so the film may be regarded as reproducing the main features of contemporary life.

Q. I suppose you have never been to the west?

A. No.

Q. Would you advocate that captions should be printed in the vernacular on the films?

A. Yes, because if you want to make the films popular there should be vernacular captions to make them understandable and to increase their educational value.

Q. I suppose you have no doubt about the educational value of the film?

A. No, none at all. On the other hand, it will widen the outlook of our people, and those who have no direct acquaintance with the west can yet know something of the west.

Q. You think that that is a reason why the industry should be guided into proper channel and more freedom should be given to the producers?

A. I want freedom to be given at this stage until the industry has sufficiently developed. At present this industry is in its infancy, and so you should offer a wide variety of choice in the matter of the films that can be shown.

Q. You said that the majority of the American films have a demoralising effect, but if America passes these films, we have nothing to do with it. Do you think that your view is shared by the public?

A. I think we should go by absolute standards in this matter, and there should not be any considerations of nationality.

Q. But would you not decide what is good and what is not good for your own people?

A. I don't believe that they will have any serious effect upon our people even if some of the films are somewhat objectionable.

Chairman : You mean our standards are sometimes looked upon as uncivilized. Take for instance, the purdah habit. And therefore you think you should educate the people to get out of it?

A. Yes.

Q. If our orthodox Indian standards are applied, probably no western film can pass muster, is it not?

A. Yes, but the standards themselves are changing, and I think we should welcome the cinema as an instrument of social reform, and therefore I am very reluctant to impose any restrictions.

Colonel Crawford : If one country took to producing films definitely of a demoralising nature. I thought you said that other countries need not pass those films?

A. How would that country, if it is a civilized one, pass those films for public amusement?

Q. It need not necessarily be what you call a civilized country?

A. For practical purposes we are thinking of American and German films and those countries are all civilized.

Q. From the educational point of view you would like to see a certain number of Empire films shown here?

A. Yes, but not exclusively, because I think films of other countries of the world should also be shown.

Q. Do you think the film industry is one which should be given Government assistance? It is a luxury industry, I suppose?

A. It is a great instrument to advance the cause of social reform, and it is also an instrument for spreading education. Since India is going to be the dumping ground of foreign films, it is as well that she should know something more of her own resources first so that she might contribute to the stock of human knowledge on this subject. As I told you, India has subjects to offer which will be interesting to the whole world.

Q. Do you think the film has any definite educative value in the classroom?

A. From a strictly scientific point of view, it is not of very great value, but for elementary education where we teach more or less abstract subjects it is. But the films must be produced with great care, because we should not present any kind of inaccuracy to the boys.

Q. I suppose the film is a great factor for mass general education?

A. My only fear is lest even in mass education the film should not show anything that is not true to facts. There might be exaggerations, perhaps unavoidable in their treatment, there might be wrong emphasis laid on certain things, but on the whole the film should be absolutely true to life. I would not have mass education at the cost of the film, and therefore I suggest that the Government and the Education Department should carefully supervise the production of these educational films.

Q. When I am thinking of that, I should like to know what amount of value visual instruction has as against actual reading?

A. I may give you an instance. Visual instruction of biological phenomena or visual representation of the different parts of the body and their action in the system will be very valuable to students taking Arts subjects. Students of history will be able to widen their outlook and their general knowledge if biological facts were presented to them in this manner.

Q. You know that education is very backward in India so far as the masses are concerned, do you think that the cinema will provide a cheap method of education?

A. And it will be not only a cheap method but an entertaining method.

Q. Would you prefer to see money directed to encouraging the cinema as against primary education?

A. I should like the cinema to be a part of primary education, as one of its methods and instruments without any conflict between them. My idea is to have, as an item under primary education, some money for the production of cinema films purely for educational purposes, and that should be controlled by Government.

Q. If the total amount of money available for primary education is limited, would you allocate a portion of that sum to visual instruction?

A. Whatever money is available for primary education must be utilised for it, but the cinema should have a definite place in the educational system.

Q. You think it should have its place? That is what I wanted. And whatever money is available for primary education, a proportion of it should be devoted to this?



A. What I mean is that this is an educational appliance which should be secured for primary education by Government just as they have to provide libraries and necessary apparatus and teachers.

Mr. Neogy : Only one question. Your idea about Government assistance is, I take it, that Government should give the correct lead in the matter of the production of historical films?

A. And scientific.

Q. And for that purpose is it your intention to see a sort of a Board set up in which, for instance, historians, archaeologists, dramatists, artists and scientists, also might find a place and who might act as a sort of advisory board to whoever may ask for assistance?

A. I mean a sort of standing committee for giving advice to the industry.

Q. In order to bring together these various experts in the various departments, you look to Government to do the needful?—that is all?

A. Yes.

**Written Statement of Mr. HABIB AHMAD ALAYI, Assistant Master, Husalnabad Government High School, Lucknow, dated the 26th November 1927.**

1. No.

2. (a) (1) 5 per cent.

(2) 2 per cent. of the population of Lucknow city.

(b) In the fourth class about 60 per cent. are illiterate and in other classes nearly all are literate. In the ladies' class the attendance is poor (in the cinema hall frequented by the Indians) and in the cinema halls frequented by Europeans nearly all are literate of whom about 40 per cent. are ladies and 10 to 20 per cent. Indians.

(c) 20 per cent.

3. Indian films, especially religious, are popular.

4. No. Lack of good Indian films.

5. Yes.

(a) No.

(b) Some of them.

(c) It depends on the quality of the film.—Yes—Krishna Janama, Pati Bhakti, and Maya Ka Bazar.

6. (a) Yes.

(b) Religious.

(1) Good western films.

(2) Indian religious films.

8. (a) No.

(b) Dearth of good actors (specially actresses) good camera man, lack of capital and unsuitable climate.

16. There are none.

22. Yes.

(a) Participation in the Imperial Conference Scheme would open new markets for Indian films.

(b) Undoubtedly.

(c) No. A slight reduction in customs duty on British Empire films would achieve the desired result. The duty should not however be reduced unduly as the British Empire would then begin to compete with the Indian films in this country.

24. (a) Films depicting scenes of public houses and dancing halls of western countries have a demoralising effect upon the public.

(b) Yes, there is a general circulation of immoral films according to the Indian standards of morality.

(c) "Sex" films are harmful to adolescents of impressional age as they open new fields for their activity and divert their attention from their legitimate work.

(d) (1) No.

(2) Yes.

(e) No.

25. Yes. These differences are responsible for the passing of a number of films by European censors which are quite unsuitable for exhibition in this country.

26. (a) Yes.

(b) The film "Razia Begum" offended the religious susceptibilities of Mohammdans.

27. (a) Almost all the sex films on account of the high moral standards of the Indian. The uneducated Indian understands western films very well and holds a very poor opinion of European civilisation.

29. Yes.

30. No, because certain films have a real educational value.

31. Yes, provided that censorship is adequate and the Board of Censors has a majority of Indians selected from all the communities.

38. "Razia Begum" was shown in Lucknow but it was considered objectionable in Delhi.

40. Posters, handbills, etc., containing pictures are sometimes objectionable. This defect can be removed by prohibiting the printing of pictures in the advertisements.

45. (a) Yes.

(b) Licensing and registering of film producing agencies and the inspection of their studios is likely to improve the quality and standard of films.

36. (b) All films should be examined by Indian Members of the Board. Gentlemen of suitable standing will be forthcoming who will devote sufficient time to the examination of films for a reasonable remuneration. The additional expenditure can be met by increasing the existing customs duty on American and Continental films.

**Oral Evidence of Mr. HABIB AHMAD ALAYI, Assistant Master, Husainabad Government High School, Lucknow, on Tuesday, the 6th December 1927.**

*Chairman:* You are the Assistant Master of the Government High School, Lucknow?

A. Yes.

Q. And what is the strength of your school?

A. 270 boys.

Q. Of all classes?

A. Yes.

Q. How long have you been in the school?

A. For the last 7 years.

Q. You are a native of Lucknow?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you go to the cinema much?

A. I have seen the cinema a number of times—not much.

Q. Where do you go?

**A. The Elphinstone.**

**Q.** It is close to you, and you go oftener there. Do you go to the 'Prince of Wales'?

**A.** No.

**Q.** The Elphinstone is frequented by whom?

**A.** By the Indian public generally.

**Q.** This is mostly Indian. And the 'Prince of Wales'?

**A.** Mostly visited by the Europeans.

**Q.** I suppose you teach only up to the matriculation standard. Do any of your boys go to the cinema much?

**A.** Very few.

**Q.** You don't see many of them when you go to the cinema?

**A.** Most of our boys are Muhammadans and the Muhammadan religion forbids the printing of pictures.

**Q.** Yes, we heard that in a way at Karachi. Do you think that people really believe that the Muhammadan religion prohibits going to the cinema?

**A.** Of course orthodox Muhammadans do not permit their sons and they themselves don't go.

**Q.** But Muhammadans do go very largely, don't they?

**A.** Those who have received western education, only those go.

**Q.** You mean Maulvis and Maulanas never go to the cinema?

**A.** That is so.

**Q.** And yet they are prepared to object to some of the shows? Do Maulvis and Maulanas discourage people from going to the cinemas?

**A.** They do.

**Q.** And students attending *maktabs* won't go to the cinema at all?

**A.** No.

**Q.** Or those who receive religious instructions from *maktabs*, they won't go either?

**A.** They won't go.

**Q.** But don't the general public go—take, for instance, the labouring class among the Mussulmans?

**A.** Well, they have not got enough money to spare.

**Q.** But would they go if they had?

**A.** They may go.

**Q.** You mean they are not conservative in that sense?

**A.** No, they are not.

**Q.** Do you see any college students in the cinema to which you go?

**A.** Not many.

**Q.** The student population does not figure largely in the attendance?

**A.** No.

**Q.** Then who are the Indians who go to the cinema?

**A.** Clerks mostly.

**Q.** Merchants, shopkeepers, that sort of people? And do they follow it well?

**A.** Yes, they follow it all right.

**Q.** Did you find any objectionable features in the pictures shown?

**A.** Yes, the sex films are objectionable from the Indian point of view.

**Q.** Not objectionable from the western point of view?

**A.** No.

**Q.** What do you mean by "objectionable from the Indian point of view"—they would not have them? They go there all the same?

**A.** They go there but certain acts they regard as sins.

**Q.** Such as kissing?

**A.** Kissing and embracing. It is quite permissible from the European point of view.

**Q.** But surely it is not a sin to embrace a woman or to kiss?

**A.** Yes, but it is from the Muhammadan point of view. A father is not permitted to embrace his grown-up daughter.

**Q.** Oh you mean in that way?

**A.** And an elder brother should not kiss his grown-up sister.

**Q.** You mean it is not usual. You don't call it a sin, do you?

**A.** It is a sin.

**Q.** Well, I suppose they understand that with the western people it is their custom. There are many things which western people do which we do not do. We do many things which they do not do. But still we understand each other, don't we?

**A.** Yes, but not all of us.

**Q.** But the class of people you have in mind who attend the cinema, they understand, I suppose?

**A.** After seeing the cinema once or twice they begin to understand.

**Q.** Once they go to the cinema and see, they begin to understand that that is their life. And who are we to object? It is for them to object. At first it seems strange and afterwards they begin to understand it. Is that your experience?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Now, do you think then that the censorship is adequate?

**A.** No, it is not adequate.

**Q.** You would cut out all these scenes even if it is their habit?

**A.** Because the films are exhibited to all.

**Q.** Do you see any dramas at all? Have you seen any opera girls, or chorus girls and others?

**A.** No.

**Q.** You don't get the English theatre here? I suppose if you cut out all these scenes, you would object to ordinary kissing. Would you object to kissing on the cheek or on the forehead?

**A.** No, not on the forehead.

**Q.** You don't mind on the forehead; only on the cheek? And would you prohibit all such pictures from being shown in this country?

**A.** Most of them, if not all.

**Q.** Why do you go then? You go often you say? Why do you go? You enjoy it?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** You do. And many people like you enjoy it?—both educated people and others. Then why do you want to deprive people of their enjoyment? Do you think it is a sin?

**A.** It will have a harmful effect on the children there. The cinema is patronised by boys of 15 and 16 years. It will have a demoralising effect on them.

**Q.** But you told us just now that your boys do not go there?

**A.** I was speaking of my school but the cinema always contains a certain percentage of boys also.

**Q.** Well, up to what age do you say it is objectionable?

**A.** Say, 18 years. Up to the age of 18.

**Q.** You don't mind boys after 18 going there?

**A.** They may go.

**Q.** So that you want to prohibit children under 18 going to cinemas where this sort of show is going on?

A. Yes.

Q. And you don't mind yourself and others going? It won't have any injurious effect on adults?

A. No.

Q. You are only concerned about the children under 18. Not because it is immoral for all the audience but you say it is bad for the children?

A. Yes.

Q. That is your objection. Then why do you object to the censorship? The censorship is adequate. Only you say there should be a certain class of films which should be prohibited for children under 18. That is your point?

A. Yes.

Q. Otherwise you are satisfied with the censorship?

A. Yes.

Q. Now, have you seen many Indian films?

A. Yes. I like the Indian films but they are not good films.

Q. But you like them all the same. Supposing you were given a choice between Indian and western films, supposing there were two theatres side by side one showing Indian films and the other showing western films, which would you prefer?

A. I would prefer the western film because it depicts the scenery very beautifully.

Q. The scenery is well represented and you like the art?

A. Yes.

Q. But what about the general public?

A. The general Indian public would like the Indian film.

Q. Although they may be crude. So the Indian films are becoming popular?

A. Yes.

Q. And you find no objection to Indian films yourself?

A. No.

Q. How many Indian films have you seen?

A. About four or five.

Q. In all these years?

A. Yes.

Q. Do they show Indian films regularly in this theatre to which you go?

A. Not regularly.

Q. How often do they show them?

A. Once or twice a year.

Q. Why is that if it is so popular? Why is it they don't show them oftener?

A. They have not got the supply.

Q. If there was a better supply they would show more and they would attract a larger audience?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you think you can use the film in supplementing the education given in your school? Educational films such as history, geography and science. Do you think you can use the film to supplement the education you give to your children?

A. Yes, especially in the teaching of geography. It will be very helpful.

Q. But which would you prefer—magic lantern slides or the film? Which do you think would be more useful?

A. I have not made any comparison between the two.

Q. I suppose you don't use either?

A. Magic lantern slides have been shown in my school a number of times and once the boys were asked to visit the cinema to see some scenes of Iceland.

Q. They liked it?

A. Yes.

Q. You are not in a position to tell us which would be the more effective method?

A. No. Of course, boys have a native interest in moving things. So that will appeal more to them.

Q. It will capture their attention much more than a standing slide can do? Do you think the Educational Department should distribute films of that sort for use in schools and colleges?

A. It would be a very expensive item.

Q. Still, how are you concerned with that? Do you think it will be a useful item?

A. Yes.

Q. And a necessary item?

A. No, not necessary.

Mr. Neogy: Have you seen this film—"Razya Begum"—to which you refer?

A. Yes.

Q. Did you see any objection in that?

A. Yes, it was objectionable because a Muhammadan queen was shown there and she fell in love with a slave. That was the text of the thing.

Q. But is not there a reference to that in history?

A. But what is given in history need not be repeated.

Q. It should not be repeated on the screen even if it is historically accurate, and even if it is taught in the schools?

A. No.

Chairman: Why not?

A. It is not necessary to remind people of these things every now and then.

Q. But you do so in history?

A. Yes, but for educational purposes. But we are not educating people with these films.

Q. Don't you believe in mass education?

A. I have never thought about it.

Mr. Neogy: Was any objection taken to this film being shown in Lucknow?

A. Yes, there was a certain amount of objection but the film was shown and it had its run.

Q. Was any representation made to the Deputy Commissioner?

A. That I do not know.

Q. But you say it was considered objectionable in Delhi. Was it prohibited there?

A. Yes, it was prohibited there. I read about it in the newspapers.

Q. Then your point of view seems to be that no Indian queen or Mussulman queen or any Moslem member of the Royalty should be represented on the screen generally?

A. Yes, of course I would not like to see any Muhammadan queen or Indian queen in any degrading situation.

Q. But you won't object to any representation of any distinguished lady of that type on the screen if there was nothing objectionable from the moral point of view?

A. No, I would not object.

Q. I am very glad you make this statement because a witness at Peshawar told us that as Mussulman ladies observed *purdah* it would not be proper in any event to represent any Muhammadan lady on the screen in whatever surrounding it may be. You don't hold that view?

A. I think he holds much saner views than I do.

*Chairman* : Are you a graduate?

*A.* Yes.

*Mr. Neogy* : Have you seen any mythological Indian film?

*A.* Yes,—“Ganga”.

*Q.* You don't find any objection in going to see Hindu mythological films?

*A.* No.

*Q.* You go there just for the sake of enjoyment; so you don't think that from the Muhammadan point of view there is any objection to seeing any Hindu mythological film?

*A.* No, I don't think so.

*Q.* You have spoken about yourself. What about the Muhammadan audience generally. Would they care for such mythological films?

*A.* They won't. Some of them won't see films.

*Q.* Oh yes, the extreme orthodox class. They would consider it a sin to see any picture, whether moving or stationary, and they would object to being photographed themselves or seeing any photograph of a man or woman. That is one class?

*A.* Then the remainder may be divided into two classes. One class will be that which, on account of their communal scruples, won't see any picture showing the religion of the Hindus.

*Q.* Is the number of that class very large?

*A.* Yes, it may be 50 per cent. Then the remainder will go to see films of that type for the sake of enjoyment.

*Q.* What percentage of people belong to the first class, representing the extremely orthodox?

*A.* 20 per cent. And 50 per cent. for the second. 30 per cent. of the Muhammadan population would see no objection to seeing the Hindu mythological film.

*Q.* Now you object to posters and handbills containing objectionable pictures and you say that the difficulty can be removed by prohibiting the printing of pictures in advertisements. Do you mean to say that the handbills should not contain any pictures?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* What about the posters?

*A.* The posters too.

*Q.* That is to say you would prohibit posters, except the letter press? And the newspapers also must not print picture block?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Is not that rather drastic?

*A.* They may be allowed to print pictures showing processions.

*Q.* You say the uneducated Indian understands western films very well. What do you mean by understanding?

*A.* The film prepares his mind for what is coming next. So he is enabled to understand the whole thing.

*Q.* I see, he understands the general purport of the subject and can follow every detail?

*A.* There are people who read films for those who cannot follow what is written there.

*Q.* You say they hold a very poor opinion of western civilisation?

*A.* The first time they visit the cinema; then they get accustomed to it.

*Q.* Then there is no harm done. Just as you get accustomed to seeing ladies riding. You don't think ill of it. Similarly, as you go on seeing these pictures, no harm can possibly arise so far as your morals are concerned?

*A.* Whatever it is, the pictures have no longer any bad effect on them.

*Colonel Crawford*: I would like to take you up on the questions *Mr. Neogy* has just been asking. You say the uneducated Indian understands the western films very well. *Mr. Neogy* got out of you the reply that they can follow the story?

A. Yes.

Q. Then I gather from the balance of your answer that, having followed the story, they say: this is western civilisation, and if that is so, I have got a very poor opinion of it. Do you see the films yourself?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you think it is a typical representation of western civilisation?

A. I think so.

Q. And you have a very poor opinion of it naturally?

A. I think this is their standard of living.

Q. That is what I mean. You think it is the western standard of living and you think it is a very poor one.

*Mr. Neogy*: Just as you consider our civilisation a poor one.

*Mr. Green*: No, no, *Mr. Neogy*. We both agree that the western civilisation shown on the film is poor, but we do not agree that that is a true picture of western life as it is lived.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer*: You have just said to *Mr. Neogy* that it is a sin to see photographs. Is it a sin to be photographed or to see a picture?

A. Both.

Q. Now, I will give you an instance. There is an old gentleman who won't like to be photographed, but if a picture is produced before him he won't say it is a sin to see it?

A. We can't shut our eyes.

Q. You won't consider it a sin?

A. If I were an orthodox Muhammadan I would have done that.

Q. You would shut your eyes also?

A. Certainly. I would cut off the head.

Q. I was told that it is a sin to be photographed but it is not a sin to see a photograph which is before you. Is that true?

A. I don't know, I am not an authority on this subject.

Q. You have said kissing is a sin—for a father kissing a daughter. I mean there are two kinds of kissing—there is a lover's love and a father's love. Supposing a father sees her from the point of view of a lover, then it is a sin. But suppose a father sees his daughter from the point of view of a parent is that a sin?

A. It will not be a sin, but still it is always better to remain on the safe side.

Q. It is better not to kiss? Suppose she wants to go to her husband the first night after her marriage and the father kisses her, you won't like that thing to be done?

A. No.

Q. If you see a lady in a picture who observes *purdah*, you won't believe that it is a real picture, I suppose?

A. Well, I may believe.

Q. Knowing that that lady observes *purdah* and if she is produced on the screen, you won't believe that it is a real picture?

A. Well, her husband himself may photograph her for the screen; or her brother may be an actor himself and he won't mind taking a photograph of a *purdah* lady.

Q. With her consent?

A. Or without her consent, whatever it is.



**Q.** Suppose there is a historical film and you know that such a lady was a very pious lady and if she is shown to have eloped with a Hindu lover and if this is produced, you will certainly feel that this is not a correct picture?

**A.** Yes, but still it would injure the feelings.

**Q.** But you won't object if a true and accurate account is given on the title of the picture? You won't object to that?

**A.** I don't follow.

**Q.** My question is this. If you know from history that a lady was very pious and she is now reproduced on the screen as having eloped with a Hindu lover, you would not like that film even though you knew she was a pious lady?

**A.** No. I will object to that.

**Q.** And such objections have been raised in the past?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** And true objections were raised?

**A.** I cannot say whether they were true or not, but objections were raised.

**Q.** We have been told that there is language difficulty in respect of titles shown on the screen. Can you suggest any remedy? In what language should titles of the films be written? Here is a circular. (Handed to witness). Read it.

Do you think this language will do for all the provinces? Will it solve the language difficulty?

**A.** For this province it will solve the difficulty.

**Q.** This is from Rawalpindi and the Punjab.

**A.** For the Punjab also.

**Q.** And what about other provinces?

**A.** I do not know. English is the only suitable language for the whole of India.

**Q.** Illiterate people do not understand English?

**A.** Yes, but they ask other people in the theatre to explain.

**Q.** Then why should they lay so much stress here in this circular?

**A.** This is for the benefit of Urdu-knowing people.

**Q.** For those who do not understand English?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** What language should be adopted for the titles of films for those who do not understand English?

**A.** There is no common language. English is the only common language.

### Oral Evidence of Mr. D. P. MUKHERJEA, Lecturer in Economics and Sociology, Lucknow University, on Wednesday, the 7th December 1927.

*Chairman:* You are lecturer in Economics in the Lucknow University?

**A.** I am lecturer in Economics and Sociology.

**Q.** How long have you been here?

**A.** For the last six years, this is the 7th session here. I come from Calcutta.

**Q.** Do you go to the cinema much?

**A.** Yes. I go there very often.

**Q.** Have you been to England?

**A.** No.

**Q.** Or anywhere else out of India?

**A.** I have been to Ceylon.

**Q.** You have seen our questionnaire?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** On what points would you like to enlighten this Committee with your views?

**A.** I have made certain observations here, and I think I can take question after question. 3 or 4 questions I cannot answer because I have not got the materials with me.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer :* You have given us a written statement?

**A.** No. I was only asked to come yesterday. I prepared some notes yesternight.

*(To Chairman :)* As regards the second question, among the educated classes the students' frequency of visits is greater than that of professional classes, and still greater than that of Government clerks and other people. 75 per cent. of the students and journalists in Calcutta city, Lucknow and Allahabad—not so much in Allahabad.

**Q.** 75 per cent. of the student population you mean in Lucknow?

**A.** In Lucknow it is smaller, but in Calcutta it is much larger. It varies from 50 to 75 per cent.

**Q.** Probably we will get evidence about Calcutta while we are there?

**A.** Here it is 50 per cent. of the student population.

**Q.** College students?

**A.** Mostly college students, not school students.

**Q.** Where do they go?

**A.** There are four theatres in Lucknow. There is one in the cantonment to which no students go. The other theatres are the Prince of Wales, the Elphinstone Picture Palace and there is a smaller one in Aminabad where students do not go generally.

**Q.** The Prince of Wales is the fashionable one?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** To which Europeans go?

**A.** Yes, but Indians also go there.

**Q.** To which theatres do the Europeans go?

**A.** They go to the Cantonment theatre and the Prince of Wales theatre. They very seldom go to the Elphinstone. They are mostly Indians; but of the professional classes very few go there—that is what I have noticed.

**Q.** What do you mean by professional classes?

**A.** I mean lawyers, doctors and business men. They don't go much, and the tendency is for an increase among all classes and specially among the illiterate classes, who form at most 20 per cent. of the total number of people present.

**Q.** That is in what theatre?

**A.** In the Elphinstone. The illiterate classes don't go to the Prince of Wales Theatre at all and there is a larger proportion at Aminabad.

**Q.** What is the name of that theatre?

**A.** I forget it. It was owned by a particular friend of mine who gave it up, Mr. Gayan Chand.

**Q.** Is it running now?

**A.** Yes, it is running now.

**Q.** And you go there pretty often?

**A.** I don't go there very often, I go usually to the Prince of Wales or the Elphinstone.

**Q.** Now have you seen any Indian films?

**A.** Yes I have seen Indian films.

**Q.** Can you tell me who your friend was who gave up that theatre?

A. Mr. Gayan Chand. He has now opened a gramophone shop in Hazratganj.

Q. Was it a paying concern?

A. It was a paying concern so far as he told me.

Q. Did he sell it?

A. Yes, he sold his rights.

Q. Do you know for what reason?

A. That exactly I don't know.

Q. Anyway do they show Indian films at all?

A. Yes, but the percentage is very small here in the Elphinstone.

Q. At Aminabad?

A. I cannot say because I don't go there very often, but from the posters I think the majority or very many of the films are Indian.

Q. And none of them are shown at the Prince of Wales?

A. The Prince of Wales shows none at all; the Elphinstone shows some and Aminabad more.

Q. You have seen Indian films yourself?

A. Yes.

Q. How many have you seen?

A. The last that I saw was "The Light of Asia" shown here. I saw it of course in Calcutta also. Then there was "Krishna Kanta's Will" which is a dramatised version of Bankim Chander Chatterjee's famous novel.

Q. What is your opinion of the popularity of Bengal or Bombay films in these provinces?

A. Well, they appeal to a certain section of the community but I don't think they appeal to the educated classes.

Q. Why?

A. For various reasons. The artistic effect is very bad, the production as a whole is very poor, which might be due to the fact that possibly Indian life is not well represented at all there. I mean, artistically there is some misrepresentation and there is some bad representation in Indian films.

Q. How do you mean misrepresentation?

A. I remember just now one lady, Miss Patience Cooper probably, who was appearing in the role of Sita and she came on with high heeled shoes, and another Rajput Raja was dressed up all in the Mogul fashion.

Q. That shows that gentlemen like you have to guide them?

A. Well, not exactly like me—artists I should say.

Q. Knowledge of history is also necessary?

A. To some extent; educated people must come in but not censors.

Q. Of course not censors; censors are for other purposes. And do you think Indian films are getting popular?

A. I should think so.

Q. And if they are better produced they will be much more appreciated?

A. Certainly; for instance, "The Light of Asia" commanded a bigger audience than usual.

Q. Did you not detect any defects in "The Light of Asia," inaccuracies and misrepresentations?

A. Inaccuracies certainly, but I would not call them misrepresentations.

Mr. Coatsman: They had macadamised roads?

A. Yes. I would not call them misrepresentations.

Chairman: Anachronisms? The daughter-in-law sitting in front of her father-in-law?

A. With all that it was a better picture than any other I have seen.

Q. You think that there is scope for the development of the Indian film industry?

A. Certainly.

Q. And do you think any effort should be made by Government to foster it?

A. It all depends upon the nature of the effort. Just now I can think of one or two things that will help in a great way. One is the giving of scholarships to desirable students, sending students for example to Los Angeles, Hollywood or the Gaumont Studios. That is one way. There are other ways. One way I can suggest is passing some kind of bill on the lines of the British Cinematograph Act that within 25 years a certain percentage of Indian films will have to be shown.

Q. The quota system?

A. The quota system, though not exactly on the same lines as the British law.

Q. Certainly, everything is different there.

A. There should be some kind of duty of course but not now.

Q. Now it was suggested to us yesterday by Dr. Mookerjee that a good reference book giving an accurate historical account of the ancient history of India, the dress, the manners, the reigns of different people which would be a stock on which film producers might draw, might be brought into existence by the Government. I mean Government calling upon competent people to write such a reference book.

A. That is a very good idea. It was acted upon by the Bengali stage.

Q. What is that?

A. Before 1922 almost all our dramatic performances were suffering from the same defect.

Q. A want of knowledge?

A. An absolute want of knowledge and then I remember Sisir Kumar Bhaduri, who was a professor at the time, gave up his professorship. He called upon R. D. Banerji, the man who was responsible for the Mohenjodaro and Harappa excavations. He was very much interested in the theatre and they were great friends. Bhaduri called upon another friend—Dr. Chatterji, Professor of Philology, and authority on dresses, and on Charu Roy, the artist. They all put their heads together and devised the dress and the scenery for “Sita”, a play which has run for more than 150 nights in Bengal.

Q. You mean that is only a small attempt?

A. Not one attempt; now every theatre is more or less going on that line.

Mr. Green: Without Government aid?

A. Without any Government aid at all.

Chairman: You think that private effort is equal to such a task?

A. Certainly.

Q. And you think private effort will come forward in this way to aid the film industry?

A. Not that. Conditions are slightly different here. You require more money for films. I was reading only yesterday an article in the *Atlantic Monthly* about the cost of films. Of course the cost is certainly much greater there.

Q. Now as regards this book of reference—I will call it a book of reference to be concise—for story writers and scenario writers, do you think that people like the gentlemen you have mentioned, do you think their services would be indented upon by the industry to write the book?

A. I think so, because I know one gentleman got nearly Rs. 300 to Rs. 400 for his scenario.

Q. Don't you think a book like that, which must be illustrated, will be a costly book and it will not be a book which will be used very largely by the reading public? It is a book of reference only which will be required for a particular trade which is in its infancy. In fact the film industry exists only in Bombay and possibly, in Bengal. Do you think you can depend upon this industry to produce that book?

A. Oh! yes, I think I can.

Q. You mean you can produce a literary book?

A. No, I can depend upon private enterprise to request these people to produce such a book without Government aid.

Q. I don't know why you say that, on what basis?

A. Because it is my experience.

Q. You don't know the producers in Bombay, they are a very primitive type of people who have no ambition of their own, no literary taste.

A. Well, Sir, I have infinite faith in personalities. One man, S. K. Bhaduri, has been able to change the whole look of things in Bengal on the stage.

Q. The stage is different.

A. Before he came to the stage he wanted to have a film company of his own. He established a film company of his own, but owing to certain reasons which I cannot tell you just now, he failed. But if he had got some financial assistance he would have succeeded in giving us really first rate films. I have so much faith in him.

Q. But he has failed. He has not succeeded so far and yet you say you can depend upon the industry of such people to produce a book of reference of this sort?

A. I can, in spite of that.

Q. Will you produce a book?—Supposing you were entrusted with a book of that sort on the chance that the industry will pay for it, would you undertake it?

A. If I knew anything about it, I would certainly do it. I would rather take money from Madan's Company than from the Government.

Q. Don't you think such a book will also be useful for the teaching of history in schools and colleges?

A. In the first place I think there will be great difference of opinion about particular points and you know the archaeologists, specially here in India, fight like Kilkenny cats about certain points about dress for instance. I know R. D. Banerjee prepared certain dresses and such things for Bhaduri and at once some other historians came forward and said this point was wrong and that point was wrong. It is so difficult to get unanimity of opinion about ancient Indian history.

Q. That is yet another difficulty in the way of producing such a book. You are only enhancing the difficulty.

A. Yes.

Q. And with that difficulty you say Government aid is not needed?

A. Yes, Government aid is not needed, specially with reference to the production of such a book.

Q. Very well, probably one may take a different view. Now, do you think that young men and women will come forward to play for the film?

A. For the time-being Indian women will not come forward except of the unfortunate class but very many Indian young men are willing to come forward.

Q. What do they want then? Why don't they come forward? Whom have you in mind?

A. Specially, say, B. A.'s and M. A.'s; they are coming forward.

Q. Where?

A. In Calcutta I know in the film industry very many litterateurs are coming forward,—I can mention some six or seven of them—for the cinema. There is Tagore's son-in-law's brother who has produced a series of photographs about gestures and postures—Mr. Dhiren Ganguly—and he has appeared too on the Indian film.

Q. Do they appear on the stage also?

A. I know six or seven of them.

Q. You think there will be no difficulty?

A. No difficulty.

Q. Do you think anything should be done to train them?

A. Yes. I have suggested scholarships.

Q. You believe in scholarships or in sending for experts from abroad here?

A. Not at all. I don't believe in importing experts.

Q. How many students can you send?

A. One a year by the Government at most, but I do not depend upon the Government only to provide scholarships. Private enterprise like Madan's, if they know full well that there is any scope for the development of then Indian film, can be made.....

Q. How are they to be made?

A. If they know full well it will be to their own profit and interest.

Mr. Green: "Enlightened self interest"?

A. Yes, self-interest. It is much cheaper to have an Indian graduate trained abroad than to bring out experts.

Q. You don't think Government should do anything?

A. Government have technical scholarships and Government should send these men out on a provincial basis—say one student once a year or in alternate years might be set apart for the film industry; but mainly I depend upon private enterprise.

Q. Have they done anything so far? How long have Madan's been in the field of the cinema industry?

A. I think from my very boyhood.

Q. Have they sent a single scholar for training abroad?

A. That I do not know. I know Mr. Madan's second son, who was my class fellow in St. Xavier's college, has himself gone.

Q. That is true, but have Madan's given any scholarships to train people?

A. I don't know.

Q. But still you believe that you can, in the first instance, depend upon private enterprise to give scholarships to train people?

A. To some extent. If they know there is scope for the Indian film industry. At present they don't know.

Q. You think there is plenty of scope for the film industry?

A. There is.

Q. They are in the field and you say they don't know?

A. They don't know that their Indian films, if well done, will command as large a market as American films.

Q. Don't you think they are in a better position to judge than you?

A. No. Being a representative of the public I know the public demand better. It may be in vain to say so. But I know full well how these things are managed. They fear the imaginary bogey of public opinion and they cater to public opinion. So far as public opinion is concerned, I think I am a better representative than Madan's.

Q. I do not understand what you mean by the bogey of public opinion.

A. That is exactly what happens. They say this film is good for a certain quarter, for the illiterate classes, or this film is not good for another show. This is all false. I have seen good films in certain bad theatres and bad localities, frequented by the illiterate classes as much as in good theatres frequented by the literate class in good localities. So what I mean to say is, there is absolutely no basis for this kind of classification.

Mr. Neogy: Merit is appreciated by everybody in India?

A. Yes.

Q. And yet Madan's do not know it?

A. They do not know it, that is what I have found myself.

*Chairman* : Had you any connection with the exhibition of any pictures or is it merely as an on-looker?

A. Merely as an on-looker but almost every week I go there.

Q. Well, it is rather a queer statement to make; that people in the business don't know.

A. It is not exactly like that. You are slightly misunderstanding me. There was for instance the picture on Relativity. It was a highly technical film. That was shown in the Palace of Varieties and I know some 20 or 25 people sent a representation to Madan's to show it again at Bhawanipur. There are 2 or 3 theatres in the Bhawanipur side of Calcutta but it was not sent there.

Q. Probably we are digressing from the point.

A. But that is a fact I want to impress on you.

Q. What do you want us to do in that case?

A. In that case I don't think the Committee can exactly help much in the matter, but some change in the angle of vision of the private owners themselves is wanted. We cannot exert any pressure on these people ourselves because we cannot write any articles in the press.

Q. You say they are so much afraid of the bogey of public opinion which is the more reason why you should influence them.

A. But we have absolutely no voice in the press because the press won't publish any articles criticising the films.

Q. I suppose you don't know anything about this "block" or "blind" booking.

A. But I know one thing is done. All the tickets are sold in advance; one man buys up all the tickets, say, in one row and these tickets are afterwards sold at a higher price—a 4 anna ticket for 5 annas say.

That sort of thing happens in theatres also, especially when a popular piece is coming on.

*Mr. Coatsman* : At football matches too.

*Chairman* : Well, these are all incidents in life and I do not think we should complain about it. Now, have you anything to say? You are a Professor of Economics?

A. Sociology, not exactly Economics.

Q. What do you say about this tariff business.

A. I am sorry I cannot say anything about it. I have not studied it.

Q. Then as regards legislative or administrative measures which may be taken by Government, you have suggested one or two things—scholarships and the quota system.

A. The quota system modified by Indian conditions of course.

Q. What is your suggestion to improve the Indian film industry—I mean the technical side of it?

A. Well, just as an outsider without knowing about the technique of the industry, I know there are certain defects in the films shown. For instance, the lighting effects for which even Indian light is not sufficient as I understand and for which some artificial arrangements are needed, and things of that kind.

Q. Very well, that is a matter of technique with which you are not familiar. Now, what do you say about Question 21, have you anything to say on it?

A. I am against State agency, dead against it and for the following reasons. Exhibition of films conforming to certain moral standards.—Now no State agency can and should fix moral standards. Neutral Distributing agency.—It cannot be neutral. As regards a centralised organisation, I do not believe in that kind of centralisation. What I believe in is this, that the provincial boards might remain what they are at present and they might be helped by a central Board.

**Q.** That is about censorship; this is for distribution, exhibition and production. Anyway, I suppose you believe that educational films will be of great value?

**A.** Yes, and if there is any need for State agency it is only in educational and public utility films.

**Q.** You are for State agency in that direction?

**A.** Only in that direction.

**Q.** And what do you say about this Resolution of the Imperial Conference?

**A.** Well, I cannot advocate any special preference. I think the British Empire films must enter into competition with other films.

**Q.** You wouldn't have preference even on the reciprocity basis?

**A.** Yes, they must enter into competition with other films.

**Q.** But I suppose you believe in the exchange of useful films to spread knowledge of each other's conditions?

**A.** I always make an exception in the case of educational and public utility films.

**Q.** You advocate some preference being given to them?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Import them free of duty?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** You mean educational in the broader sense?

**A.** Yes. Indian historical films might be spread abroad.

**Q.** Otherwise, in the case of merely entertainment films, you are against any preference?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Now, what is your opinion about the effect of the cinema on the people of this country?

**A.** The idea here is that it has got some demoralising and injurious effect on the public but I do not believe it.

**Q.** You are for free entry?

**A.** Absolutely, unless they are frankly sexual films.

**Q.** What would you call frankly sexual films? Supposing a man takes a girl to the bedroom and lies face to face with the girl and kisses her on the lips—would you call that a frankly sexual film?

**A.** I think some line can be drawn there; but even then I keep an absolutely open mind.

**Q.** You have no fear of your youth being contaminated.

**A.** I have no fear.

**Q.** I suppose you are a young man yourself?

**A.** I am 32 and with the average expectation of life of an Indian I must be considered old!

**Q.** Anyway that is your view—you don't think there is any danger?

**A.** Not at all. On the other hand, sexual educational and hygienic films might be shown.

**Q.** Only to students?

**A.** To those interested in the subject.

**Q.** It must be under proper control: you cannot expose physiological films to all and sundry.

**A.** If they are very very scientific, I have not the slightest objection. On the other hand I think I should recommend that kind of thing.

**Q.** I quite understand young people being made familiar with the future conditions of their life; all that is kept too secret now and it would be better to educate them; but you cannot do it at a public show.

**A.** Even there, I am not so sure about that.



**Q.** Anyway, you don't think there is anything wrong in the films, either foreign or Indian.

**A.** There is only one film which I remember was on the wrong side of decency.

**Q.** Then you think the censorship is adequate as it is. I do not mean the machinery but you are satisfied with the censorship itself.

**A.** Yes, but that does not mean I am satisfied with the censorship as it is.

**Q.** Is it too strict?

**A.** No, not too strict. It has not got any broad ideas.

**Q.** I do not understand.

**A.** So far as the censorship of films that come here is concerned it is quite all right; if the function of censorship is to limit and control, then it is all right and I am satisfied; but if it is the function of a Board of Censors to invite new films or suggest.....

**Q.** You mean they should create artistic taste?

**A.** Quite.

**Q.** You want judges of art?

**A.** Not exactly judges of art but judges of educational values. They have not contributed anything so far as I know.

**Q.** How can a Censor do that?

**A.** There is a friend of mine who is one of the Censors at Calcutta—at least he was 3 or 4 years ago; I used to have talks with him and I asked him whether it was his function to suggest to Madan's to bring in those films. He said he couldn't do it. I think that is wrong. Control and suggestion are quite different things, but I think no constructive effort has been made by the Censors.

**Q.** I fear you are altogether mistaking their functions. Do you mean that censors should do advisory work for the trade?

**A.** It is not exactly advisory work, but they might make suggestions for the improvement of the films.

**Q.** But you think that so far as censoring goes, it is all right?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Now, what is the object of a Central Board if you advocate one?

**A.** The object is the spread of educational and public health films.

**Q.** That is a different body you have in mind, it is not a censorship body but a film industry advisory body?

**A.** Not exactly to advise the film industry but to advise only one aspect of it. I don't mean a central advisory board to be located in Simla or Delhi, functioning all by itself. We will have a provincial board in United Provinces, in Bengal and in the different provinces with a central Board at some central place for the purpose of advancing educational films and not for the censoring of films only.

**Q.** You have no suggestions to make as regards the machinery for censorship?

**A.** No, in fact I would abolish it altogether.

**Mr. Coatman:** With regard to scholarships, you propose that the leading people in the industry should offer scholarships as well as the State. Do you suggest that the State should specifically earmark scholarships for sending students abroad for the cinema industry?

**A.** Yes, scholarships should be specifically earmarked for the cinema line.

**Q.** Why?

**A.** For this reason; it has been found by experience that students proceed to England to pursue a particular course, but once they reach there they take up some other branch; that is what most people do.

**Q.** Are there scholarships earmarked for any special industry?

**A.** Yes, the United Province Government offered a scholarship for the leather industry only a few months ago. There were three scholarships for three in-

industries which were specifically earmarked by the United Province Government only a few months ago. Even one scholarship for tailoring was offered.

Q. I am thinking of the Government of India scholarships?

A. I am not sure about it.

Q. Why do you think that scholarships should be earmarked for the cinema industry?

A. When people return from England they will be able to give expert advice to the trade here.

Q. Why should Government worry about it?

A. For the simple reason that if Government will give scholarships and send students abroad, these students after their return will be able to give advice to the trade and they in turn will be able to improve their industry which means increase of revenue to Government eventually, because it is to the interest of Government to see that the industry flourishes.

Q. Can't you think of other industries which are far more important?

A. The film industry too has great scope. Once Government shows that it sympathises with it, then there is ample room for the improvement of the industry in this country.

Q. How many scholarships do you think should be given?

A. Only one scholarship in a year will do, or in the alternative, one in two years, and these scholarships should be tenable for two years.

Q. What would the scholars do during those two years?

A. They would be attached to a studio abroad or they will be apprenticed somewhere in Hollywood, and the Government of India should be able to provide facilities for these people through their High Commissioner in England. For instance, these students might learn photography, so that when they return they might be in charge of what you call Exhibition. The exhibition in India is very bad at present, they do not know art of throwing the pictures on the screen; they do not know the proper lighting arrangements. In fact, our students could learn all these things abroad. They would also learn how to write flytles.

Q. What will be their career? Would they go about as Government officers?

A. Not at all, because when the Government of India sends scholars abroad, they don't undertake to give them employment.

Q. What I want to get at is why should the Government of India do this?

A. Because it will be a sort of protection to the industry and it will also show the people engaged in the cinema industry that Government are not apathetic to it.

Q. Do you know if any other Government gives scholarships for the cinema industry?

A. I don't know of any, because no Government stands in need of sending students outside their own country. In the United States for instance, they have their own trade and industries, and they never send out their students for training.

Q. Don't you think the right solution would be to increase the scientific knowledge generally of Indians rather than send odd individuals abroad?

A. Even for increasing our scientific knowledge we have to go abroad.

Q. I hope you will agree with me that the development of industries does not depend on individuals interesting themselves in any one specific industry, but it depends on the general diffusion of a knowledge of science?

A. I do agree with you there, but it all depends on what you call the general diffusion.

Q. Don't you think that we would rather be wasting our scholarships? Suppose we send youths to the South Kensington college or to the Manchester University or to Cambridge and give them a general scientific education, bring them back as first class chemists and so on. Could they not train others in this country after their return and carry on the necessary researches here?

**A.** My experience is that when our students return from England after studying there for some years, they are only fit to work as professors and teachers.

**Q.** Don't say that they are fit only for professorships because it is professors who are the mainspring of progress.

**A.** But the film industry when it is fully developed might have scientific experts and different laboratories of their own.

**Q.** Surely the best way of developing any industry, whether artistic or mechanical, is by the general diffusion of scientific knowledge?

**A.** Among a greater number of educated and interested people and not among the masses.

**Q.** Within the last fifty years almost all the first class industries have been started by the discoveries of theoretical scholars, aeroplanes, motors, electrical industry and all such things?

**A.** But in India the Tata Co. have not taken advantage of so many scientists who have returned from England. I may say that our present industries do not owe as much as they ought to to our England-returned people. On the other hand, we want to give a quicker push to our industrial progress and to the film industry, and we want more economic workers.

**Q.** And you think that by giving scholarships for this specific purpose you would attain that object?

**A.** Yes.

**Mr. Neogy:** Are you aware that students who have gone abroad to learn this particular branch of the industry have come back and found employment in the different studios and they have proved themselves very useful in the matter of film production? From that point of view it would be useful to send a larger number of young men abroad for study. If we were dependent upon a general diffusion of scientific knowledge, how long do you think it will take for scientists to gradually improve the film industry?

**A.** It will take them an interminably long time, because even the first class science students when they return from England have absolutely no eye or taste for industry. They are only theorists, and they do not want to apply their knowledge to industries. On the other hand, if you send people abroad to America or other countries for technical training by State aid or private enterprise, when they come back they get employment and they are much better able to help the industries than if you trained your people here.

**Q.** As regards scholarships, you depend not merely on Government but also upon the trade?

**A.** Primarily upon the trade, that is what I said.

**Q.** From your experience of what has happened to some of your friends in Bengal who tried to get a footing in this industry, can you depend very much upon private enterprise to see that the right thing is done?

**A.** Of course, I know only four or five people intimately who were interested in the industry, and one or two of them are still in the industry.—others have left the line, but the causes of their failure are possibly not economic. They left the line for reasons which I cannot tell, because they are private reasons.

**Q.** You seem to think that the present exhibitors are not enlightened or enterprising enough to go out of the beaten track?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** If that be the position, how do you expect them to have the enterprise to send young men abroad for necessary training?

**A.** If they know that public opinion and Government are sympathetically disposed towards this industry, they will certainly do it.

**Q.** You seem to think that they are incapable of taking a correct view?

**A.** Just now they are more or less blind, and the press and other associations can do a great deal to educate them.

**Q.** But you say the press is hopeless?

4. Then the Director of Public Information can do it by publishing pamphlets and so on.

*Chairman :* Who is to compel them to read those publications?

1. I think the public are anxious to read all Government publications as far as we can see from the criticisms appearing in the press about some of the Government publications.

*Mr. Neogy :* You gave an instance about certain experts having been consulted in Bengal for reproducing certain aspects of ancient Indian history. Now, we are considering the case of an industry which is not confined to any province. We have the producing industry in Bombay, Calcutta, Rangoon and to a very small extent in other places too. Now, inasmuch as you require an advisory organization which would be helpful not merely to any particular producer in any particular locality, don't you think a much larger body is needed, consisting, let us say, of historians, artists, dramatists, scientists and so on to advise the industry as a whole, and for that purpose can you depend upon a small producer whose headquarters are, let us say, at Nasik, to do the needful? Can he approach a man like you who may be the very best authority on the subject and who is in Lucknow? For the purpose of assembling the various experts and for giving them proper directions and then making their advice readily available to all the various producing companies, don't you think a much larger body is needed?

1. As things stand at present, the film industry is confined to three provinces namely, Bombay, Bengal and Burma. But as far as Bombay is concerned, you can always depend upon capitalists to furnish the capital.

*Q.* As far as I can make out, the gentlemen who were consulted by that particular theatre owner in Calcutta happened to be his personal friends. Do you think that men of eminence, great scientists, dramatists and men like Dr. Tagore would be readily accessible to every humble producer? Or would it not be far better to leave the Government to organise a sort of advisory board so that it may invite all these gentlemen of eminence to come and take part in it and then make their advice available to the various producers who may be in need of such advice?

1. I have my doubts about it, because Sir Rabindra Nath Tagore would prefer to give advice to a private company rather than to Government, so far as I know him. Of course there is no greater authority than Mr. R. D. Banerjee in these matters.

*Q.* Then again you are very anxious to see historical truths being reproduced in the matter of dress and so on. You have already referred to the fact that experts differ in these matters. A producing company in Nasik might thus be representing a particular period of Indian history in a certain way and a producing company in Bengal would be representing that very particular period of Indian history in quite a different way. How will you overcome that difficulty? You referred to the dispute between Bhandarkar and Banerjee?

1. They did not differ on material points. In the compilation of a book those points would certainly matter, but in regard to films the materials will not be so divergent as to create some kind of feud like the Hindu-Muhammadan feud.

*Q.* If you are anxious for historical accuracy, is it not better to have a sort of uniform standard laid down?

1. I distrust uniform standards to such an extent that I would rather let the industry go wrong than accept a uniform standard of dress or manners.

*Q.* You said that the Board of Censors should not merely perform certain police functions but also advise the producers in regard to the artistic and educational qualities of the pictures. Are you thinking more of the Indian producer in this matter, because what we have found is that certain producers have gone to the length of spending some thousands of rupees on the production of a film, and when they have submitted it to the Board of Censors, it is rejected? In the present state of the industry it acts as a great discouragement. Is it your view, therefore, that even in the matter of production, the

Board of Censors should give them advice so that the producers may not fall into these pitfalls?

A. Yes, that is right.

Q. So you are thinking more of the Indian produced film when you suggest that the Board of Censors should not merely control from the political or moral point of view but also give them advice?

A. What I wanted really is not a Board of Censors, but a Board of Mentors, with really first rate men on it, and not of the type of people that you now get.

Q. What should be the constitution of the Board?

A. Some Government officers may be represented there as also some non-officials. But if you will allow me to say so, I am not really satisfied with the abilities of the present non-official class.

Q. Whom would you like to see on the Board?

A. I should like to have there men of really good standing, of great abilities, for example, artists, a man like Percy Brown, Tagore, Soloman of Bombay and people of undoubted calibre. Also I should like to have people on the Board who are above all communal prejudices, great statesmen, distinguished Members of the Legislative Assembly.

Chairman : Are they above communal prejudices?

A. I hope some of them are.

Q. Lord Birkenhead does not think so?

A. That is the argument you are putting against his speech. There must also be on the Board men who should be above all kinds of prejudices and who are in a position to take a detached view of things. Men like Dr. Jagadish Bose, Dr. C. V. Raman and others should also be invited to sit on the Board.

Mr. Neogy : The whole idea is to improve the Board of Censors and to include in it men from all walks of life including businessmen?

A. Yes, we have got numerous distinguished businessmen in Bombay, Madras and Calcutta who can all be requested to sit on the Board.

Q. Then are you contemplating a Central Board?

A. I want Provincial Boards in each province which should be aided by an advisory central body, and there should be an exchange of educational films, i.e., one province should send its films to another.

Q. What function would the central body have with reference to the work to be performed by the Provincial Boards?

A. As I said just now, suppose a film on rural indebtedness is shown in Bengal, and other provinces want to show the same film, then it can be sent to each province by turn so that the people might learn how things are working in different provinces.

Q. Then you want to see the functions of the Board of Censors very much enlarged?

A. Some of the functions will be taken away from them.

Q. You want them not merely to do censoring work but to assist in the educational propaganda?

A. Yes, with Mr. Coatsman as President of the Board, it might be able to do much. If there is anything like a centralised Board it must be an educational body.

Q. Supposing we had two Boards, the present Board to continue to do its present functions and another Board to do the propaganda part of the work, exchange of ideas in different provinces and so on?

A. That would mean duplicating work unnecessarily and it is not going to be very heavy work, as far as I can see.

Q. The work is certainly heavy.

A. I can't say about that.

*Col. Crawford:* You seem to be very much in favour of the adoption of the film for educational purposes and for public utility purposes, and that obviously is not a commercial undertaking, because there is no money in it?

*A.* Is it a fact, and can it be supported by statistics?

*Q.* So far as we can gather, it is not a profitable undertaking and therefore it will have to be undertaken by Government. Would you be in favour of a Government studio undertaking the production of public utility films?

*A.* I do not know much about the uneconomic nature of these educational films. If that is so, the conclusion is that private companies will not take it up, and somebody else will have to do the work. I know we will have to get educational films from America. But unless I know the uneconomic nature of these educational films I cannot answer this question.

*Q.* Supposing we were to find out that it was not an economic proposition, would you be in favour of Government undertaking this work?

*A.* Not before I am satisfied that these films are not available from America.

*Q.* Do you consider, for instance, American agricultural films are quite suitable for the masses here?

*A.* To some extent they are, because of their educational value. They will be able to see how they are carrying on agriculture in America, and a mere description of Indian agriculture alone would not be of much use to our masses.

*Q.* You think that if Indian agriculturists see improved methods in the film, they will be better understood by the masses?

*A.* Yes, I think so.

*Q.* Supposing we were to recommend the formation of a central studio and for a period to employ experts in every branch of the art of scenario writing, production, commercial work and all the scientific work connected with the industry, would that not provide you with a good opportunity for training local people? Or it is a preferable method to give scholarships to young men to proceed to England?

*A.* I should rather prefer that our students be sent abroad, and that would be a cheaper proposition than the proposition of the Government of India undertaking the task of erecting a big studio and bringing highly paid people from abroad.

*Q.* Nearly all departments of the Local Governments are producing films, and they are spending money for the production of films. But if they were to pool the money they are now spending, it is quite possible that with that sum a good and up to date studio could be erected in this country. Don't you think it would be advantageous to give the practical training to youths in this country?

*A.* I don't think we can give the best training to our boys here. I am quite sure about it. Because there is another danger. We will be importing experts from England and America. Generally speaking the India Government will always import people from England—it is natural.

*Q.* I don't think that in this particular line you can get men in England. Germany is the place. Theirs is absolutely the best.

*A.* Well, Germany or America. Now when we get these people to come here, we can't ask them to pack off after five or ten years.

*Mr. Green:* Yes, you can. On short-term contracts.

*Col. Crawford:* They work on short term contracts in America. We may have to pay more—with the idea that they will train the Indians.

*A.* I would like to know if the American experts who were brought to Jamshedpur have been asked to go away.

*Mr. Coatman:* Yes, they go out. Some of them have already gone.

*Mr. Green:* But that is a business concern, that is not the Government.

*Col. Crawford:* Primarily this is a concern for the production of public utility films which the Government will have to undertake. But at the same time it gives you a first-class studio in this country, to which anybody can go for training.

A. Well, I don't know whether any first class studio can be made at all here or not because this is really a very expensive affair. I was reading an article in the *New Atlantic* only last night—there the writer gives a description of Los Angeles and he says it means a tremendous expenditure. The Government of India if they are so keen about it might spend the money on more profitable concerns.

Q. I am only saying that they may be already spending the money individually. Each province individually might already be spending the money—that would cover the cost of a first-class studio, even if you take all the expenses into consideration. Now, Mr. Neogy has asked you and you have been very keen about special guidance specially for historical films. Now, the formation of such a studio would afford you a certain amount of guidance because the central studio could supply the particular expert for the guidance you require. The ordinary producer could go to the studio and be placed in touch with men with the requisite knowledge.

A. Of course, only if we can make out a case for a central studio, then what you say would follow logically.

Q. It could act as the mentor that you want?

A. Yes.

Q. Also might it not provide an opportunity for a better class of people to produce films? Say, for instance you yourself have an idea of a story which you would like to film. Well, if you can get the use of the central studio on payment of a rent, you can do so.

A. But is there any guarantee that the central studio will accept my story?

Q. They would rent the whole of the studio and staff to you.

A. Oh, that is your proposal?

Q. You produce your film under your own direction, in accordance with your own ideas. It is a commercial proposition. They rent the studio to you.

A. How does the Government stand to gain by that?

Q. They don't want to gain. They want to get out public utility films.

A. Then why cannot Government give some kind of protection? There is the other alternative of helping these people, Madams, for instance, to do it for them.

Q. But they have still got to produce their public utility films. It is quite possible that private work may be very expensive from the Government point of view.

A. How? I don't follow exactly.

Q. Well, I will give you an instance that I know of. For instance, one government department can import educational films from England at 3 annas a foot. But put out to private contract, they were quoted Rs. 2 a foot.

A. Well, if that is admitted, then of course nothing can be said about it.

Q. I mean you have no objection to the scheme except that it must not cost money?

A. Not quite. I have only this suspicion that once the whole industry is in the hands of the Government.....

Q. Not the industry. I am only suggesting a central studio to undertake Government work for the production of public utility films. Non-commercial. Now, if that studio is set up as a model, on absolutely up-to-date lines, I was going to suggest that it may assist you in certain directions. It is a model for your film industry and provides you with an opportunity for seeing all the latest machinery and everything. It provides you with a possible mentor in historical matters. At the same time, it does this Government work. And it also provides a better class of man with an opportunity to produce his film. Now does the idea appeal to you?

A. This idea does not appeal to me. But once I accept your idea, all your arguments follow naturally.

Q. On what particular grounds do you object?

A. Well, I don't like to saddle Government with the cost of maintaining such a costly studio and importing people from outside. We have got a sufficient number of outsiders here already on very high salaries.

*Chairman* : Not in the film industry.

A. But still in the other industries : that is good enough.

*Q.* Still you want training in foreign countries?

A. Yes, so that our own people may get instruction there and come back and develop our own industry. Really your idea is a kind of protecting business with the central government acting like a grandmother.

*Mr. Green* : Then why have State Scholarships?

A. That's not quite the same thing. I put it as a second alternative.

*Q.* Then on your principles you ought to abolish them altogether.

A. I rather wish that the film industry should go to rot than that it should depend on that kind of assistance from the Government which will make it remain perpetually grateful to the Government of India and it should be looking ever onwards to the Government for that kind of assistance.

*Chairman* : It won't be perpetually in that position. Only till the industry is able to stand on its own legs.

A. Well, Sir, protected infants always remain infants.

*Q.* You don't believe in protection.

A. Not to that extent.

*Q.* You don't believe in steel protection.

A. Not much. That is exactly what I feel about it.

*Mr. Green* : I will only ask you about your idea about the functions of the censors board. You agree that if the duty of the censors is merely to control, they perform their functions adequately at present?

A. Yes.

*Q.* But you want them to undertake further functions and you suggest the grafting on to the present system not exactly of a further board but of an enlarged board consisting of artists, statesmen, scientists, business men, men of culture. I am still not clear what their functions are to be. Are they to see all the films?

A. Yes, pre-view.

*Q.* Members of the board?

A. Yes.

*Q.* Members of the whole board?

A. Well I think the board will not be unwieldy—say, 8 or 10. And they will look to the exhibition of the film and they will pre-view the film.

*Q.* They will inspect the film and censor it. Now, you contemplate this in every province? You want local boards of this nature in every province?

A. Yes.

*Q.* You would be interested probably to know the amount of work done in Bombay in connection with the mere inspection of films. Last year—and it is increasing every year—the mere inspection of films amounted to 3½ hours' work a day, five days in the week, throughout the year without any holidays. Now, can you get your distinguished artists or distinguished statesmen and scientists and business men to undertake it?

A. 3½ hours a day for inspection of films only?

*Q.* That does not include attending the meeting of the boards, or getting to the place where the film is exhibited, and writing your reports. Where are you going to get your men?

A. Well, that is because in Bombay the film industry is larger than it is elsewhere.

*Q.* Bengal is large too.



A. Bombay is the port where you bring in these films.

Q. It is the most important but not the only place. It does about half the work of India.

A. Anyhow, all the films come from and go to Bombay.

Q. No, a lot go to Calcutta. But it does not matter where they go. That is the amount of work that has got to be done. How are you going to get these gentlemen, with whom it would be an honour to sit on any board, to undertake this amount of work?

A. Well, is there any hard and fast rule that they should not be paid?

Q. I am coming to that. You would be prepared to see them paid?

A. I would.

Q. Well, being gentlemen of very high qualifications they would presumably require adequate remuneration? What kind of remuneration would you suggest?

A. Well, as the directors do. Say Rs. 50, or Rs. 20 a meeting.

Q. A commercial meeting does not ordinarily last more than an hour. Sometimes only five minutes. If you divide 3½ hours up and pay them Rs. 50 for each five minutes.....

A. If they attend for some time, say half an hour.

Q. But the point is they must attend. Here are a number of films that have got to be inspected. You can't say, "This week I cannot come, I am going away." Because that would hold up the whole trade.

A. But the presence of all the people for 3½ hours might be necessary only in Bombay.

Q. Well, take Bombay. Who is going to pay them in Bombay?

A. Would you please supply me with the facts about Calcutta and other parts. How many hours are taken up by the Bengal censors?

Q. Calcutta works about two-thirds of the Bombay time. That is for rather over two hours a day.

A. What about Lucknow?

Q. Lahore has hardly started. Lucknow has not got one. Madras does very little. Rangoon does relatively little.

A. If Burma, being the third in the film industry, does very little, I don't see any reason why.....

Q. Possibly it is practicable in Burma, but I am concerned naturally with the most important places. How is your scheme going to be financed?

A. Well, the proprietors themselves might be made to pay.

Q. But the proprietors already complain that the Rs. 5 a thousand feet which they have to pay is a sufficiently heavy tax. All that tax will meet is inspection by one paid inspector and a paid secretary. If there is any doubt about it the film would be referred to a sub-committee of 2 of the board. The board gets small fees.

A. Well, I don't understand this. I have been reading some of the evidence. I think one gentleman in Bombay said that the distributing agents of some of the films make some money out of it and it is not exactly as unprofitable as they would make it out to be.

Q. I don't think they can afford to pay the tax unless they make a profit, and the more you tax them the less the profit.

A. Anyhow, it is not exactly a starving industry.

Q. You have not gone into the details of the financial or economic side of the industry?

A. No.

Q. Well then possibly I should drop this. I will ask you just one other question about the board. Let us assume that you can be financed, that you can get gentlemen of the standing for the remuneration to do the work. Now, you have told us that historians, artists, archæologists have their disputes. If

we have one artist on the board his word would be law. What about his rivals—I do not mean commercial rivals,—but what about his rivals in learning who will not agree with him?

A. Anyhow that will only be an intellectual struggle. It does not stand in the way of exhibiting your film.

Q. But I understand your anxiety was that the film should be accurate and correct, that is why you want to put these gentlemen on the board?

A. Quite.

Q. Has one artist or one archæologist or one statesman the right to impose his views on the whole of India?

A. That is why I was for having the provincial boards.

Q. Then the provincial board can only give its decisions for its own area.

A. But the central board will act as an advisory body and arrange for the exchange of films between the different provinces.

Q. That is a commercial function. You are strongly opposed to Government undertaking any business—and I agree with you there. How can the central board do anything as regards the circulation of films?

A. The exchange of films is not a commercial proposition.

Q. It is one of the biggest commercial propositions in America to-day.

A. But I don't think it will be a very big proposition in India, because we know the number of Indian films is very very small just now.

Q. We are not concerned with Indian films only. We are concerned with western films as well.

A. But I referred to that in reference to educational public utility films. They are not a large number.

Q. Well, I have misunderstood you from the start in that case. Have you been confining your evidence purely and solely to educational subjects?

A. Not at all. I say that the censorship is adequate with reference to the other films, but, if there is any need for such an advisory board it will be mainly for educational and public utility films.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer*: I find you are in favour of sending men abroad?

A. Yes.

Q. How are you going to do so when we were told by a student who has just returned, Mr. Devare in Bombay, that they do not show their trade secrets in America? How are you going to meet this? It is useless sending men there with scholarships to do nothing.

A. Is that true of Germany also?

Q. It is said of America. It may be so in Germany too. We don't know.

A. But in America there are two Indians in the film business at Los Angeles, one of whom is Mr. Guha.

Q. Well, that is what Mr. Devare said in Bombay.

A. But I know these Indians are there.

*Mr. Neogy*: Mr. Guha has come back, he is in Calcutta, but I am told there are other Indians there.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer*: Then you think there will be no jealousy?

A. There will be jealousy, no doubt about it.

Q. They show all their secrets?

A. They don't show all their secrets. But of course I think Indian students might somehow or other ingratiate themselves if they stay there for some time. And it is not extremely difficult for them. They can learn everything. Even the Ford Company allows Indian students to come in.

Q. Well, wouldn't you prefer a class attached to your school if not here?

A. For what purpose?

Q. For this film industry?

A. No.

**Q.** Some gentleman yesterday said it would do.

**A.** That might be his opinion. It is not mine. It won't do for this reason that we have not got the experts here.

**Q.** Don't you want any help from Government?

**A.** But it is impossible here. Under ideal conditions Government might do it.

**Q.** Well, Government might bring men from outside and teach the boys here, your own people?

**A.** That is frankly impossible. The Government cannot be prevailed upon to bring in people and subsidise one Lucknow school here. Allahabad would be crying then.

**Q.** Even if Government is prepared to do it, you won't agree?

**A.** If the Government is prepared I would agree. But the Government won't agree.

**Q.** To solve all the difficulties of your advisory boards and other expense, would you suggest legislation on lines similar to the Indian Companies Act,—just as the registrar watches and records the companies' work—to have a Screen Officer of the board to do all this work.

**A.** Well, I am not a lawyer. What will be his functions?

**Q.** His work will consist of recommending films, collecting information and giving guidance to all those who want his assistance.

**A.** Guidance on what particular point?

**Q.** I have just told you. Give help in having scenes filmed and also give scientific aid.

**A.** One screen officer?

**Q.** He will be there just as the registrar is there. He will have his own department under him. You won't advocate that?

**A.** No. There is no board here in the United Provinces?

**Q.** They have just started a board.

**Mr. Green:** No, no. Punjab have.

**Sir Haroon Jaffer:** Wouldn't you like to have one here?

**A.** Yes, if their functions are exactly what I would like them to be.

**Q.** Would people come forward to work on a small remuneration here?

**A.** Oh yes, certainly.

**Q.** Free?

**A.** I think so.

**Q.** You yourself would lend your services?

**A.** I would certainly do so. Willing people are never wanting, especially in Lucknow.

**Q.** You said just now actors will come forward from respectable families but it will be difficult to get actresses. What methods do you suggest to bring actresses from respectable families?

**A.** Well, I have absolutely no idea about that. We have tried it even on the stage. Tagore tried it.

**Q.** I suppose they would not like to mix with the prostitutes?

**A.** That is one thing, but they would not like to come on the stage at all.

**Q.** Suppose these prostitutes are prohibited from taking part, do you think the respectable people would come?

**A.** Even then it will take some time to persuade them to come.

**Q.** From Calcutta?

**A.** Even from Calcutta a very small number. It will take a long time. But you cannot ask the prostitutes to go away. The stage will fall down like anything.

**Q:** Would you like posters and advertisements to be censored?

A. There is nothing harmful there. What is wrong in them? I fail to notice anything.

Q. I have just seen one yesterday. Kissing scene. What do you say of all that going into colleges and schools, and boys seeing them?

A. It is ridiculous to look at it in that way. They are absolutely harmless. They will start kissing themselves in a few years. It is only training them in advance.

Q. Will they kiss all the ladies they come across?

A. They don't kiss all the ladies in the poster. I am reminded of the joke where a prisoner wanted an umbrella to protect himself from the sun while going from his cell to Tyburn to be hanged!

Q. So you are not in favour of stricter censorship?

A. Not at all. The censorship is quite adequate.

**Written Statement of Munshi RAM PRASAD, B.A., P.E.S., Head Master, Government High School, Hamirpur, dated the 7th December 1927.**

**OPINION.**

In order to encourage the use of Cinematograph in India it is not only necessary that a State agency be created to undertake the management of the film industry but steps be also taken to teach the art of cameraman. For this purpose—

- (1) A Government institution may be started to teach film industry at some central place. If a large number of useful films are thereby produced for sale, it will appreciably relieve the strain on the financial resources.
- (2) The use of the cinematograph may be taught in all training colleges of different departments and pupils specialised in it. It may also be introduced in normal schools, and, if possible, training classes of the Education Department.
- (3) Scholarships may be awarded for the study of the art in foreign countries.

The introduction of the cinematograph in schools will entail slight alterations in the designs of the buildings and necessitate the formation of a cinema education committee on the line of the Text Book Committees, for the purpose of recommending and approving films of right sort. The control over cinema operators, film producing companies and proprietors may be on the lines of that maintained over printing presses and editors, printers and publishers of newspapers.

**ANSWERS TO THE QUESTIONNAIRE.**

1. I have no special knowledge of the cinematograph industry.

2. (a) Generally speaking, a majority of loiterers that have enough money for the purpose, frequent cinemas. They include mostly half educated men, and school and college boys. Illiterate people or those knowing Hindi or Urdu only, do not take much interest, as the performance is not quite intelligible to them. My answer refers to Agra division and I hope it is applicable to other divisions of the province as well.

(b) I think the average cinema audience consists of soldiers (Indian and European), about 40 per cent. Half educated men and students, about 45 per cent. Illiterate persons or those knowing Hindi or Urdu only, about 7 per cent.

(c) Children under 14 years of age (who do not attend in large numbers) and adolescents of impressionable age are found, I think, not less than 40 per cent. of the whole assembly.

3. With the Hindu audience the films of religious stories and with all Indians those of heroic adventure, are most popular. Schoolboys like films of historic events and also those of geography that appeal to imagination. Films of volcanic eruptions, falls of snow in the countries of the northern latitudes and of earthquakes are much appreciated.

The films of places and events which the people often hear and read about, and of the details of which they are well conversant, are mostly liked.

4. The Indian audience is welcome to the exhibitor who, however, deems soldiers and Englishmen his mainstay.

5. (a), (b), (c) I have seen only a few films depicting Indian life, including those of the Delhi Durbar of 1911, which the people attended with great interest. They were of a fairly good quality.

6. (a) Certainly.

(b) Adventurous stories from national literature and history will appeal most strongly to the educated classes.

(c) Stories of mythologies, adventurous scenes like those of wrestling matches, and others depicting places of pilgrimage, will appeal to the illiterate masses, provided there is some one on the spot to explain them.

7. For the Indian troops the films referred to under 6 (c) are suitable in addition to those of battles in different fields. I am not in a position to say anything about the difficulty.

8. (a) No.

(b) The difficulties are as follows:—

(1) The ignorance of the people.

(2) The dearth of properly trained men to do the work.

(3) The want of suitable and interesting films.

(4) The want of explanatory sentences in the Indian languages.

The means of assisting the industry are suggested above.

9-13. I am not prepared to answer these questions.

14. The use of cinema for teaching purposes will certainly create a tremendous interest in education and help the growth of the industry. There is a demand for such films.

15. Yes. I believe in a few years much progress can be effected if the industry is steadily pursued.

16. No. The remedy is suggested above.

17. Certainly, provided that the enterprise attains an initial success.

18. Certainly. The teachers should be given a chance of and facility for being properly trained in the use of films in order to be sufficiently acquainted with the means of protection from accidents.

19. For want of proper organisation it must compare adversely for some time.

20. Yes, I consider the expenditure most justifiable.

21. The proposal is good and practicable. A State agency is certainly wanted to serve as a model for private enterprise.

22. (a) and (b) Yes.

(c) I hope so. At present we are bound to have foreign films to serve as models for their production in India. But they need censoring from the Indian standpoint.

23. (a) Such films can be intelligible and serviceable if they are displayed side by side with those depicting the condition, resources and habits of the Indian people.

(b) A guarantee may be had, if possible, from various Governments that the films representing Indian life are properly censored before export to India.

24. (a) and (c) The films exhibiting wicked deeds with triumph have a demoralising effect upon the public, specially upon the inexperienced though

literate youths and the illiterate masses. They encourage them to imitate such deeds.

(b) Such films as I consider more or less objectionable are exhibited with impunity.

(d) For the reasons noted above, I do not think that the censorship is adequate.

(e) No, because, generally speaking a limited number of people attend the cinema exhibition.

25. All films, excepting those meant exclusively for non-Indians, ought to be censored from the Indian standpoint.

26. I can only say that *enough* care might be taken as I have no example to cite.

27. (a) All films representing western life are not unintelligible, but as their explanatory sentences are only in English, they are not understood. Such films are generally neither understood nor appreciated. They may be explained at display. I have not heard of any film misrepresenting the West.

(b) No.

28. *Vide my answer to Question 24.*

29. No; what is moral for adults cannot be immoral for a child.

30. No. This will make cinema exhibition unpopular. But the display causes a great strain on the eyes, specially of young children. It should be the guardians' look out to let their children attend whenever they like.

31. Censorship is certainly an effective method of guarding against the misuse of a film.

32. The films displaying more or less objectionable deeds ought to be strictly censored.

33. It depends on the degree of strictness of censorship. A moderate degree of strictness can do no evil.

34. (a) No.

(b) Yes.

(c) The Central Board should be approachable to those provincial, and be empowered to refer cases to Government, both local and central, directly.

(d) It may be financed by the Government of India to whom it ought to be chiefly responsible.

35. (a) Yes.

(b) No. Not at present, as the cinematograph has not yet attained sufficient popularity in India.

36. (a) I have no experience of Bombay or Calcutta. I do not like undue dependence on the subordinate staff nor do I believe in honorary workers, specially in a subordinate position.

(b) Films may be examined conjointly by the members of a Board and a paid expert appointed to work with them as a responsible officer on a good salary. A member is bound to devote sufficient time if he gets some remuneration, and a man of fair commonsense can do the work.

37. The safeguards are adequate, but their application in right spirit is certainly necessary, specially in cases referred to under Question 24.

38 and 39. No.

40. The control over printers and publishers is sufficiently strong under the Press Act and no particular censorship of advertisements seems necessary. I have not seen any objectionable cinema advertisement.

41. Yes, so far as exhibition of religious stories is concerned.

42. Yes. One seat may be reserved in every Board, for a representative of the trade.

43. If the Guarantee referred to under 23 (b) is forthcoming, no stricter censorship is necessary. If not, exports and imports must be very carefully censored.

44. So far as I know, they are on the whole indifferent, and their assistance is not very valuable.

45. (a) Immoral films and those referred to under Question 24 above, should not be allowed production or exhibition. All cases of contravention of the provisions of the Cinema Act need prompt action.

(b) Yes, if inspectors of a right sort are carefully selected for the purpose.

**Oral Evidence of Munshi RAM PRASAD, B.A., P.E.S., Head Master, Government High School, Hamirpur, on Wednesday, the 7th December 1927.**

*Chairman:* You are the Head Master of the Government High School at Hamirpur?

A. Yes.

Q. It is in the Jhansi district?

A. Jhansi Division.

Q. What is the population of Hamirpur?

A. About 3,000 or 4,000.

Q. Have you got a cinema there?

A. No. It is a very small place.

Q. Which is the nearest place to it?

A. Cawnpore.

Q. How far is it from Cawnpore?

A. About 40 miles.

Q. Where were you before that?

A. I was in Gonda. I have been in Hamirpur since August 1926. I was for about three years in Gonda.

Q. There too there is no cinema?

A. No.

Q. I suppose you do not go to the cinema anywhere?

A. We do get cinema performances at Gonda, Muttra and other places, but I do not say that I know much about this.

Q. You do not go to the cinema apparently?

A. No, but my children do go.

Q. Where do they go?

A. Whenever a cinema comes to the district.

Q. You say travelling cinemas come there?

A. Yes. They did come to the place where I have been.

Q. How often did they come?

A. They do not come very often, but on an average once a year.

Q. Wherefrom do they come?

A. They come from the nearest places. Gonda is not very far from Lucknow, and Hamirpur is not very far from Cawnpore. But Hamirpur is not a suitable place for cinema performances so far as income is concerned.

Q. You mean travelling shows are not popular?

A. No. People don't attend, especially in small places.

Q. Of course you cannot tell us what sort of show comes there. You mean cinema or magic lantern?

A. Magic lantern is available everywhere. I mean cinema.

Q. They come with a tent?

A. Wherever I saw them they came with a tent.

Q. Is it a company?

A. Yes.

Q. Where is the company situated?

A. They are travelling companies. I do not know. I suppose some come from Bombay, some from Calcutta. They travel from place to place with cinema shows. But I have not seen any cinema show in Hamirpur. I can speak about the educational value of films.

Q. You say you can use films in educational institutions?

A. Yes. We ought to. We are not able to do it. I would like to do it.

Q. You think instruction will be more effective if you have the cinema to assist you?

A. Yes.

Q. Was there any proposal to that effect in your province to give you the assistance of cinema? Had the department any discussion about it?

A. There has been some discussion about it, but no practical steps have been taken yet.

Q. Have you got any conference of educational officers in your province?

A. Yes.

Q. Have you attended it?

A. We have had only Inspectors' conferences.

Q. Where do you say there was a discussion?

A. I have seen in reports a general talk about this. At some places, so far as I have heard, there have been apparatuses supplied, but there is a dearth of people to make use of them. Teachers cannot use them, they do not know how to do it.

Q. You mean they do not know to handle the machinery?

A. Yes.

Q. Why do you say the cinema will be useful in your school work?

A. It will be very effective and very interesting. The teaching of historical and geographical topics could be assisted by the cinema, and in literature too.

Q. Within the last ten years have you lived in a place where there is a cinema permanently?

A. No.

Q. Do you think Government should produce historical and geographical films, educational films?

A. Yes. I want the formation of a film committee for the Education Department.

Q. Only for that department? What about public health and other things?

A. I have said for all departments. I have written in the beginning under (2), "The use of cinematograph may be taught in all training colleges of different departments and pupils specialised in it."

Q. What do you mean by training colleges of different departments?

A. We have the Police Training College.

Q. What do you want the policemen to do?

A. The policemen can make use of these pictures. The Sub-Inspector or Inspector might show to people the result of crime, punishment that is awarded to criminals and things like that. He can also show something about the morals of good people and in that way it would be very useful. So that he will not only be a sort of punishing officer but will give some instruction as well and prevent crime. This will make him a friend of the people as in other civilised countries and no longer an object of terror to the masses.



**Q.** What other department have you in mind?

**A.** The medical department.

**Q.** Public health you mean?

**A.** Yes, and agriculture.

**Q.** You want all these different departments to have different institutions or one institution?

**A.** Training institutions may be attached to them.

**Q.** What about the studio?

**A.** There ought to be a central place for the whole of India with branches wherever necessary.

**Q.** What is the central place to do?

**A.** It will keep supervision. Not only supervision but it will so to say direct the agencies in different ways and serve as a model.

**Q.** For what?

**A.** For the production of films, use of films, etc.

**Q.** Do you want Government to produce entertainment films?

**A.** If it could, so much the better.

**Q.** You mean a model institution started by Government to produce educational films and also entertainment films so that the producers may benefit by it? That is your idea?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Why do you think the Government should do it?

**A.** It is very difficult to answer. Government takes the responsibility of keeping Government schools.....

**Q.** If it is educational I understand, but why do you say that it should also produce entertainment films?

**A.** Teaching morals to the people is the duty of Government.

**Q.** You mean amusement for the poor is a matter of public concern?

**A.** Certainly.

**Q.** Just as they provide parks and other things, this must be done for the poor people?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** So public money you think should be spent on it?

**A.** Certainly. In that model institution we should have a sufficient number of films for sale also.

**Q.** It can produce films, hire them out or sell them?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** But what about the money required for primary education?

**A.** But is not this education?

**Q.** This is adult education and also school education?

**A.** It is a part of education no doubt.

**Q.** You give it the same importance as other branches of education?

**A.** It is the same thing whether you teach orally or by means of moving pictures.

**Q.** You are rather hard on the cinema goers. You say, "Generally speaking, a majority of persons that have enough time and money for the purpose, frequent cinemas".

**A.** That is the position and I want it to be improved. We have to improve the morality of the people attending and people exhibiting.

**Q.** You have not got much personal experience in that direction?

**A.** In so far as my experience goes I say this. So far as I have seen, among Indians such people generally go.

Q. I do not think we should trouble you in that line because you have not got much experience.

A. Very well. In answer to question No. 30, I say, the display causes a great strain on the eyes, specially of young children.

Q. It is more a matter of theory than of actual observation, is it not? Your school children do not go to the cinema?

A. Students of this school do not go, but my own children do go. In fact, sometimes I also did go and it caused a great strain, I mean to say continuous going.

Q. But you have no continuous going at all?

A. I am speaking from experience of other places.

Q. Why do you say it causes a great strain? It depends on the projector and upon the film. Probably you saw only very bad films.

A. Some of the films were good enough, but continuous exhibition of them did cause some strain.

Q. You mean children should not be encouraged to go too often to the cinema, is that your point?

A. Yes. There should be occasional exhibition of cinema in schools also in the different classes.

Q. You believe in that?

A. Yes. In answer to question No. 36 (b) I say, " Films may be examined conjointly by the members of a Board and a paid expert appointed to work with them as a responsible officer on a good salary. A member is bound to devote sufficient time if he gets some remuneration, and a man of fair commonsense can do the work ".

Q. You want every film to be examined by all the members of the Board?

A. Not by all.

Q. This censorship, I suppose, you admit should be in the port of entry for foreign films?

A. If the exporting authorities can be induced to co-operate with us, they should have some check there as well.

Q. But you say that a paid man should be appointed to do the work. What is the paid man to do and what is the Board to do?

A. I say he will be helping the board. An expert will be helping the members. You cannot expect every member to be an expert.

Q. You say that the cinematograph has not yet attained sufficient popularity in India. You mean the number of cinemas is not as large as it should be?

A. And the interest is not created.

Q. You want more cinemas in the country?

A. Yes, and the right sort of cinemas under some proper control.

Q. Proper control can only be censorship?

A. Yes. I also spoke about the model.

Q. That will be a model for others to copy?

A. Yes. I say also that scholarships should be awarded for the study of the art in foreign countries. There is another thing. Control over cinema operators, film producing companies and proprietors, may be on the lines of that maintained over printing presses, and editors, printers and publishers of newspapers. That is my point.

Q. You want a cinema education committee in every province?

A. Yes.

Q. So that they may select the educational films which should be imported and what should be produced, that is your idea?

A. They need not be concerned with the import.

Q. If there are good educational films abroad they can select and advise "such and such films should be brought over here"?

A. I think it should be the duty of the film producers to send their films for exhibition here.

Q. But what about educational films? Why should not this cinema education committee select what films should be sent for?

A. In the Text-book Committee the books are sent by the publishers and the Committee has to give its opinion on them. In the same way, the producers will send catalogues as well as the films.

Q. So that they may have a view of the films?

A. Yes, and then give an opinion and recommend what may be sent for.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* For the production of these educational films, etc., wherefrom should the money come? What new tax would you suggest?

A. I suggest no particular tax.

Q. How can the Government provide money without any fresh taxation?

A. A portion of the money that is being spent in the Education Department may be utilised.

Q. They say there is not enough even for primary education.

A. If we want to do a thing we can do it.

Q. Primary education has not widely spread?

A. I think it will not have done so for some years to come. I believe in quality of work, not quantity.

Q. Do you suggest any new taxation?

A. No.

Q. Any entertainment tax or anything of the kind?

A. Wherever there is an interest you can have an entertainment tax, but where there is no interest that will not give any advantage.

Q. You say on your first page, last paragraph, "Illiterate people or those knowing Hindi or Urdu only, do not take much interest, as the performance is not quite intelligible to them." You suggest that all these titles which you see on the cinema should include titles in Hindi and Urdu so that the people can understand them better?

A. Not necessarily Hindi or Urdu, but an Indian language. Just as you have such things on cloth coming from Manchester and other foreign places, you can do it in this case also.

Q. In answer to question No. 17 you say: "Certainly, provided that the enterprise attains an initial success." Who should begin it?

A. Government should begin it. I said a model institution including a studio may be started.

Q. Or have classes in colleges of science?

A. For that I said that the teaching of this subject should be included in the curriculum of training colleges.

Q. But you do not suggest any means by which Government should pay the cost of these?

A. There is money for everything that we desire to do. We can drop some unnecessary items. If we introduce a new optional subject it does not mean much cost, and in the education department of this province we have got a beginning of the use of films.

Q. In answer to question No. 18, you say: "Certainly. The teachers should be given a chance of and facility for being properly trained in the use of films in order....." Why should the teachers be given a chance? Do you say that the cinema should be distributed to all the schools and colleges at Government expense?

A. When we have money for it we can distribute to every school.

Q. But why should teachers only be given facilities?

A. So that they might use the cinema in classes for teaching purposes.

Q. You prefer that the means of instruction in the classes should be through the cinema? You like it?

A. Yes. It may be taught orally first and then explained by means of the cinema.

Q. Do you think the cinema is much better than magic lanterns in schools?

A. Yes.

Q. Your Educational Inspector said quite the reverse?

A. This is my personal opinion. It is his personal opinion. If moving pictures are brought up before me I would have much more interest in them than pictures that are stationary.

Q. In answer to question No. 30 you say: "The display causes a great strain on the eyes, especially of young children". Do you think that young boys of 6, 7 or 8 years should be prohibited from going to these performances?

A. No. I said there that it should be the guardians' look out to let their children attend whenever they liked.

Q. What do you yourself suggest? Should they be stopped from going, young boys of 6 and 8?

A. What I say is that constant use of it would be harmful.

Q. Suppose they go twice or three times a week, then they will get blind or have to wear spectacles. Some such kind of prohibition is needed then?

A. I don't think so. Why should they have any prohibition like that? The guardians should look after their boys.

Q. You are a guardian yourself of your son. What will you do to him?

A. I will not send him so often.

Q. Supposing those who send their children are illiterate and don't understand the value of their eyes, do you mean that Government should protect them?

A. Well, the boys do not get blind at once. There will be some strain and trouble in their eyes, and when these illiterate people hear the boys complain of trouble they are not so foolish as to go on sending them.

Q. So you are not in favour of prohibition at all?

A. No, I am not in favour of prohibition.

Q. Do you think control over posters is sufficiently strict under the Press Act. I think the Press Act is only for those advertisements which are really obscene but not for objectionable films. I have seen the Press Act. In that case do you think that there ought to be a kind of censorship for this purpose?

A. May I ask how you make a difference between objectionable and other kinds of films?

Q. Suggestive and objectionable films are not mentioned in the Press Act.

A. This is a question of advertisements and posters that we are speaking about.

Q. But they don't come under the Press Act. You know the Press Act?

A. I have read it once.

Q. Are you in favour of advertisements and handbills being censored; they are not censored now; are you in favour of their being censored?

A. I do not think there is any great necessity for censoring them.

Q. So you are not in favour of their being censored?

A. No.

Mr. Green: I have only one question. In the first statement you sent us, a short one, in answer to question 35 (b) you say: "I do not believe in honorary workers, specially in a subordinate position." That was in reply to our question whether you would like a wholetime experienced well-paid officer to be assisted by an advisory board. Does that mean that you agree with the suggestion?

A. No, what I mean to say is that in subordinate positions they are not well-paid generally and we don't get people of the right sort.

**Q.** But the whole question is about a whole-time experienced well-paid officer.

**A.** Yes, but there was a question about Inspectors in question No. 36.

**Q.** But this is 35 (b), unless it is a mistake in typing. This is your original; you sent a short answer before.

**A.** The typist might have made a mistake. I have got the original here. It is 36 (a).

**Q.** The answer is in reply to that?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Then I take it you do not think you will be able to get gentlemen of sufficient standing.

**A.** You mean to say people to be employed?

**Q.** I see. I have got your other statement now. "Films may be examined conjointly by a member of the Board and a paid expert. A member is bound to devote sufficient time if he gets some remuneration." What amount of remuneration?

**A.** He might be given some honorarium.

**Q.** I am asking you the size of the remuneration, should it be Rs. 10, Rs. 50 or what?

**A.** It depends on the nature of the work.

### **Oral Evidence of Mrs. SHAREEFAH HAMID ALI, on Wednesday, the 7th December 1927.**

*Chairman:* We are obliged to you Mrs. Hamid Ali, for having found the time to come. You have seen our questionnaire?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** We want your assistance more on the question of the effect of the cinema. You take a considerable interest in the women's movement in Bombay.

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** And you are also the Secretary of the Women's Conference there?

**A.** I am on the Standing Committee of the All-India Women's Educational Conference.

**Q.** You are going to have a conference here soon—a Ladies' Conference?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** I suppose you go to the cinema both here and in England? You have been in England?

**A.** I have not been to England, I have lived mostly in Sind of late years. I have not been to the cinema much for 2 or 3 years except in the last six months in Mussoorie. I saw about 30 or 40 shows in six months.

**Q.** And when you were in Bombay you used to go there?

**A.** Very occasionally.

**Q.** What is your general impression of the effect of the cinema on the people of the country?

**A.** Well, as far as European cinema shows are concerned I think it is not good; a very few of the Indian cinema shows, which deal with religious or mythological subjects, are good but they are not wholly good because the shows are bad in themselves.

**Q.** You mean the technique is not good?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** As regards Western cinemas you think they have a generally demoralising effect?

**A.** Well now, some of the Western cinemas that I have seen are extremely good—for instance, some historical plays and plays written about some very

well-known books. Then they give you pictures of different countries which are also very instructive. But some of what are known as.....

Q. Social dramas?

A. Social dramas and the crime pictures I don't think are good.

Q. Do you think they have really any baneful effect upon the people?

A. Yes, certainly, specially on young girls and boys it has a very bad effect. I have noticed that the children go home and try to act the scenes. I have known of one or two boys who have done the same things that they have seen done in a cinema picture, broken doors of safes and taken away money simply for the excitement of seeing whether they could do it or not.

Q. You mean in their own homes?

A. Yes, in their own homes.

Q. Trying it on their parents?

A. Yes.

Q. But do you attribute it to the cinema or to the modern spirit which is coming forward?

A. Anything that is seen by the eyes by children sticks in their minds much more than what they read or hear about, and the cinema has this effect upon them that they want to do things they have seen on the screen.

Q. You think then it has an effect on the youth of the country?

A. More on the youth.

Q. Not that they are immoral, the pictures are not immoral you say?

A. Sometimes. One or two pictures I have seen were, I should say, immoral but I must say that I walked out after the first part, I did not wait to see the whole, because I did not like the tone of the play. There is nothing that you can lay your finger on and say "this thing should not be on the screen," but the whole tone of the play was such that it was not nice.

Q. I suppose you are aware that the cinema is just getting popular with the people, it has not invaded even the big towns yet, it is in its initial stage yet. Strict censorship might hamper trade?

A. Well, I think that some plays should be only for grown up people and only those fit to be seen by children should be allowed for children.

Q. Would you advocate such a system, namely, certifying films for adults only or certifying certain films as being fit to be shown to children.

A. Yes, and children should not be allowed to go to the night shows in any case.

Q. You don't mean the six o'clock show?

A. The six o'clock show is all right; I mean the shows that last from 9 to 11.

Q. Children should not be permitted to go to that?

A. Yes.

Q. And also certain films should be certified as being fit to be shown to adults only?

A. Yes, because I don't see how any Censor can reach those particular films that we are talking about. There is sometimes no particular act to which one can take exception and yet the whole tone of the play may be bad. If people want to see that kind of film they will see it, but children should be prevented.

Q. You think that is the better remedy?

A. I think so.

Q. And for such a procedure would you advocate that there should be a responsible body who will do it, and not one man?

A. Yes, and I should like women to be on that board too.

Q. You would be regarded as a conservative Muslim lady, and I suppose your views will be very valuable in that way. Suppose an Inspector who

sees a film feels a doubt as to whether a certain portion of it is fit to be seen by children and reports it to the Board, will that do for you?

A. But what are the educational qualifications of the Inspector?

Q. The present Inspector of Bombay is an English graduate, he has travelled abroad. The Secretary of the Bombay Board too has an English degree.

A. If we say that the Inspector should get the help of either the Principal of a school or of a training college, that would do.

Q. The difficulty is, if every film is to be seen by so many people, it will mean three or four hours' work every day for five days in the week, and I don't think any lady would be willing to accept that onerous task?

A. For those films which the Inspector considers doubtful we can appoint a Committee in each large town.

Q. And two or three members should see it, and if they think it is not fit for children, they may so certify. Do you think that will be a sufficient remedy?

A. It will be certainly better than what it is now, but we don't want that the children should be allowed to visit cinemas after night. They should be absolutely prohibited.

Q. What age would you lay down for children?

A. Not under 18. Both for boys and girls.

Q. Probably there may be mothers of 18?

A. We won't count men and women as children if they are fathers and mothers by then.

Q. But you know it is very difficult to distinguish whether a boy or girl is 16 or 18?

A. They will mostly be school or college going people, and as the cinemas are mostly in large towns, I think one would be able to judge their age fairly accurately.

Q. It is throwing a difficulty on the management of the cinema to distinguish whom to admit and whom not to admit.

A. They can admit children between 16 and 18, but certainly not children below 16. I have seen little children of three or four years going with their parents.

Q. If the parents take them, you have no objection I suppose?

A. I don't want them to go even with their parents. We all go to see a picture, but we don't know what is really coming on, and the parents are not responsible for the things shown there.

Q. Is that the feeling among ladies?

A. I have come across many mothers speaking about it, and I have heard them complain very bitterly about the children being allowed to go to such places, because they do not know what is coming on in the cinema.

Q. So the general feeling among the Indian ladies is that the cinema is doing harm to our young folk?

A. Yes.

Q. And before the evil spreads you want some steps to be taken?

A. Yes, especially for children.

Q. Would you be satisfied with the provision that children below a certain age should not be permitted?

A. Yes.

Q. Is there anything else you want to say?

A. There is one thing I want to mention, and it is this. I saw some dreadful films in Bombay about a year or two ago, and I do not know why such things are allowed to appear. For instance, the film called "The Ten Commandments" contains a picture in which a golden calf is worshipped.

and the woman's hand is turned to leprosy and anybody who touches her becomes a leper. I mean such things are certainly undesirable. It made me ill for days and days and I could not sleep. I know the other ladies too who had gone with me felt the same thing.

Q. Do you think it was a revolting appearance?

A. Very revolting and a very morbid sort of thing.

Q. I suppose you would say the same thing if you saw a girl hung on a steep hill and tormented?

A. I saw another thing in the film called "Nero" where the women are thrown to fishes. That was pretty bad, and I want to avoid such scenes especially for children. It does not give anybody any pleasure, rather a feeling of horror. In those matters I want stricter censorship.

Q. I suppose you are speaking from the point of view of children and not of adults?

A. My remarks apply with equal force to adults as well.

Q. Do you think that in Bombay you could get ladies to serve on the Board by rotation?

A. Yes, I think so.

Q. Have you much experience of Lucknow and these parts?

A. No, not very much, but I keep in touch with ladies here. We meet at different conferences and other places.

Q. Suppose you certify certain films for adults only. Would not that be a sufficient safeguard? In that case would you not be shutting out knowledge by prohibiting many things?

A. If you talk about the life among the millionaires, I don't think that such knowledge will do any good. But after all, is it true? I think it is all false. I don't suppose that one amongst millions would lead a life like that, and if one gets the idea that every American is a millionaire and that all men and women in America or Europe dress or live in the way they are shown in the pictures, it will have a bad effect.

Q. But now-a-days dresses and customs are getting absurd, are they not?

A. People here will get the impression that in America people have no other work to do in life.

Q. Anyway, you do not want India to learn those things?

A. No, I don't want that. Because our girls will acquire a taste for a false standard of life. I don't want such films to be shown; on the other hand, I would very much like to see plays of Bernard Shaw and others put on the screen. I don't like that things which lead nowhere should be shown on the screen because they really do more harm than good.

Q. But you know they have to produce for the millions in order to satisfy the public taste; the exhibitors have to change their programmes, and who is there to invent only things which would be acceptable to everybody alike?

A. But the same films could be made more educative without pointing the moral too pointedly.

Q. You don't want to be too strict and at the same time you want to be stricter than at present, is that your view?

A. I don't know in what way you mean stricter. I think most of the films shown here are futile. For instance, if you take a novel by Flaubert, I saw the Salambo film, and there the educative part was left out. The picture shown was quite lifeless and dull, and some parts of it were even objectionable.

Q. How is it that these civilised people in the west pass them?

A. I don't know, but the same story could be depicted in such a manner that people would really enjoy it and it would teach them a lot.

Q. Is it your idea that every film should be inspected by members of the Board?

A. I have no idea of the extent of the film industry, and I can't say about it.



**Q.** You only complain of things which you think would do injury to the people and the remedy is for us to find out, is that so?

**A.** Yes.

**Mr. Neogy:** Your idea seems to be that the primary function of the cinema is to instruct and not to amuse?

**A.** No, it is not that. I want amusement pure and simple, but without doing any harm.

**Q.** Of course, opinions are bound to differ as to where to draw the line; just as you would not object to Bernard Shaw's plays being represented on the screen, there are certainly people who would differ from you on that point.

**A.** But I would not like them to be shown to children.

**Q.** With regard to children, your position seems to be that parents do not realise their responsibility. They take their children to the shows without knowing what is coming on?

**A.** May I know how one is to find out? Because I have sometimes taken children to plays which I thought would be quite unobjectionable, and I found they were objectionable. How is one to inquire and from whom?

**Q.** You can find out from the literature?

**A.** The literature tells you very little about the play.

**Q.** Then would you make it absolutely illegal for children under 16 to go to the cinemas or would you leave it to the parents?

**A.** I should leave it more or less to the good sense of the parents, because they would at least know beforehand that certain films are considered by the Board as not fit to be seen by children. Such sort of endorsement would act as a guide for parents. If you could get the Censor Board to put in a little more information in the handbills of the plays, it will also serve as a guide to parents.

**Q.** Are you aware that Bars are generally attached to the cinemas?

**A.** I am not aware of it. I have not seen any.

**Colonel Crawford:** I gather that your major objection to the films coming from the west is that the producer overemphasises the shady side of life?

**A.** I have not seen very many films like that, but I have seen a few like that. I have also seen some which were entirely unobjectionable.

**Q.** It is particularly to the shady side of life that you object?

**A.** Also that they also give a wrong impression about the west.

**Q.** Have you taken your children to cinema shows?

**A.** I have no children myself, but I have taken the children of my brothers and sisters.

**Q.** But a lady told me yesterday that in a film, much of which was good, the child was eventually tied up and pierced, and it had such an effect on her children that they were perfectly horrified and had to be removed from the theatre. Have you any instance like that?

**A.** No.

**Mr. Green:** You told us that you saw some dreadful films in Bombay. Did you bring those to the notice of the Government or the Censors' Board or the Commissioner of Police?

**A.** I was really trying to do something about this *Ten Commandments* film, but I saw a week or so later the Delhi authorities had forbidden its being shown in Delhi.

**Q.** I thought that particular film was stopped for other reasons?

**A.** I don't know for what reasons they have stopped it.

**Q.** Then you object to excessive horrors being shown on the film?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** I may say that the Board of Censors also objects to such things, according to their instructions to Inspectors, but I think you will agree with

me that it is legitimate at times in dramatic representations to illustrate horrors?

A. A spoken thing is different. A ghost on the stage is not frightening.

Q. I am thinking of actual murders that take place?

A. But they are committed behind the scenes, and you do not actually see them.

Q. For instance, would you object to a Hamlet film being shown despite the fact that the murders might be more realistic?

A. On the stage several things are not shown.

Q. My point is, they may be shown, they may be suggested, and certain tragedies are not only necessary but legitimate?

A. The thing suggested is different from what is actually shown on the screen.

Q. Then you would agree that it is mainly a question of degree?

A. I am afraid I cannot tell you unless I see the thing in front of my eyes.

Q. I think you will agree that it is really a matter of presentation?

A. Yes.

Q. The futility you complain of is more the futility of the film producer rather than that of the censor? Do you want the censor to cut out such films because they are futile?

A. If they are both futile and objectionable at the same time.

Q. If they were merely futile, would you expect the censor to interfere?

A. Only if they are objectionable.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer*: Do you favour the cinema as a means of education in the class room?

A. Yes, I do. There will be a lot of advantage, specially for lessons given in history, geography and natural science.

Q. Do you consider the magic lantern as more satisfactory than the extended use of the cinema for schools?

A. I think the cinema pictures are much better than magic lantern pictures, because in the cinema you can show a larger picture with more life in it.

Q. Do you think there is any danger in showing historical pictures and battles and things like that?

A. Everything will depend upon how realistic you would make those pictures.

Q. What precautions would you suggest to stop such things?

A. I don't know, I can't say.

Q. Now, do you prefer Indian titles being put on in addition to the English captions, I mean Indian captions in the different Indian vernaculars?

A. Yes, I have seen in Baroda a man who was translating the captions.

Q. But if they are properly translated you would prefer them to remain side by side with the English captions which might be useful for those who do not know English?

A. Yes, I think it would be better.

Q. What methods would you suggest for adoption in order to attract actors and actresses from respectable families?

A. It will depend on the sort of films that you will exhibit.

Q. Would it not be possible to draw respectable people to historical plays?

A. We have amateur dramatic clubs everywhere and ladies also join them. But if you want to enact plays of a certain kind to which parents will take objection, then you can't get actors and actresses to take part in them. If they are historical plays of educative value to children, then I think you will easily get many men and women of respectable families to take part in them.

**Q.** Do you think a lot of promising young men and women from schools and colleges will take to the cinema line?

**A.** Not as the films are made in India at present. I don't think the industry at present is attracting our young people. I have never heard of anybody desiring to become a film actor or actress.

**Written Statement of Professor N. K. SIDHANTA, Professor of English, Lucknow University.**

2. From my experience of the audience at various picture-houses in Calcutta and Lucknow I may say that it is mainly people of the so-called educated class who frequent the Cinemas. In Calcutta there are about two picture-houses where one comes across a good many illiterate people who cannot follow the captions and are consequently inclined to be noisy and it is very rarely that one cares to go to these places. A good percentage of the audience is made up of College students and it has been so in Calcutta since the first picture-house,—the Elphinstone Picture Palace,—was constructed.

3. The cinema-goers in India or for the matter of that, in any country may be broadly divided into two classes:—

(i) Those who go to see certain "stars."

(ii) Those who are attracted by stories of love or adventure or want to have a good laugh for an hour or two by enjoying some excellent fooling.

(i) A decent percentage of the cinema-goers go to films without having the faintest idea of what it is about,—not caring whether the story is tragic or comic,—whether the photography is spectacular or not,—but simply to see Charlie Chaplin or Mary Pickford or Rudolf Valentino or some such "star." It is just an exaggeration of what the theatre-goer in England does: as one looks at the theatrical advertisement column of the "Times" one rarely sees the name of a familiar play in any one of the fashionable places nor even of a familiar author. One goes to see George Robey or Fay Compton or Jose Collins,—not the latest play of some comparatively unknown dramatist. If this is the case with a theatre-goer it is much more so with the Cinema-goer who generally has no idea of the contents of the film he is going to see exhibited nor even of its nature. The only guess he may make is from the nature of the favourite part of the leading actor.

(ii) Stories of love and passion have naturally an immense appeal all the world over,—all the more so in India as most Indian youths have to be content with this vicarious experience of love. Such film-stories are often crude and melodramatic but the average cinema-goer is no highbrow on these matters. Not all popular films are however blatantly sentimental or heavily romantic. There are numerous examples of popular films based on great novels,—*"Les Misérables," "Quo Vadis," "The Last Days of Pompeii," "The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse,"* etc. Yet there are too many instances of great works of fiction being badly mauled by cinema-producers,—Dostoevsky's *"Crime and Punishment,"* Dickens' *"A Tale of Two Cities,"* etc. The fact is this: that the art of the cinema leads naturally to over-acting and the film can never do justice to the realistic novel of the present day with its quiet representation of normal life. As the actors have to make up for deficiency of acting by changes of expression they have to give an impression of excitement and movement even where there is none. Thus an excellent romance like *"Beau Geste"* or *"Rupert of Hentzau"* or *"Three Musketeers"* is very satisfactorily filmed and attracts huge audiences.

Some films again attract audiences with their scenic effect,—the presentation of glorious landscapes, excellent colour-photography or manipulations of light and shade. A less successful device is the attempt to make Nature symbolistic as in *"Dream Street,"*—a device, which can appeal only to the few.

Some films take recourse to more questionable devices for attracting the public. The representation of the grace or beauty of the human body through

the study of the nude in painting or statuary may be appreciated in its proper light by the genuine lover of art, but the average spectator of an Annette Kellerman film is there for no aesthetic purpose, I am afraid. Much more harmful are, of course, certain "society" films or "historical" films generally associated with actresses like Mae Murray or Pola Negri. Many of them are definitely voluptuous and the suggestiveness of a film like "Passion" does incalculable harm to an impressionable audience.

The popular comic films are generally not in very good taste but the laughter which they provoke is an innocent one and it is only a canting Puritan who would cavil at such mirth as Max Linder or Charlie Chaplin provokes.

5-6. The good Indian film has yet to be born. The photography is generally weak and the light trying to the audience. But a much more serious defect is the dearth of great actors and interesting film-dramas. The spectator goes to the cinema to be amused or diverted, not to be educated. He may like a tragedy because that too makes him forget his normal life for the time being and if he sheds a few tears he has the luxury of imagining himself a better man than he formerly was. But he is not there to acquire learning or culture. He means to get his money's worth and we cannot blame him if he prefers to see Charlie Chaplin in "The Kid" rather than Mr. Rai in "The Light of Asia,"—to be entranced by Valentino in "The Sheikh" rather than by Mr. Chatterjee in "Incarnation." Moreover national literature and mythology would not mean the same thing for all Indians. The story of the Mahabharata has a charm for all Hindus and even though badly acted will attract a reasonable number of Hindu spectators but rarely a member of another community for the story as such has little to attract the sophisticated young man of this century. Great actors are not made in a decade, while great dramatists of Indian life do not yet exist. As a matter of fact one may doubt whether Indian life, laying as it does in most parts of the India a ban on the free social intercourse of the sexes, is at all suited for supplying the back-ground for film-stories. Great tragic stories may be written about normal Indian life but a picture of romantic love or passion in Indian life is bound to be more ludicrous than a similar story about western life.

12. The amusement tax is bound to be a handicap to the exhibitor, for the men of the middle-class who mostly frequent the cinema can afford to spend only a limited sum of money every month on this amusement. The tax means that a part of this money instead of going to the exhibitor goes to the Government.

16. Certainly not. The main difficulty is about actors and actresses. On the Indian stage there are very few actors who have had the advantages of a liberal education and combine genius with culture. But with the theatre it does not matter for the drama-lover has nothing better to enjoy and he goes to the best of these comparatively poor shows. The cinema-lover on the other hand can enjoy the acting of the greatest film-stars of America and Europe whenever he likes and the Indian film to be a serious rival to western films must have equally great actors; and I cannot see how this batch of actors is to be there unless the Indian Government chooses a number of aspiring cultured actors every year to send them to Hollywood or some such place to be trained in the art of film-acting. Even then we can have tolerably good actors but not great actors for the young men sent for training will not have the natural genius of Chaplin or Fairbanks. If there is a great centre of film-production in this country it will attract all kinds of young men a few of whom may have the genius for acting. But if a batch has to be sent abroad one can only choose men of apparent ability who will somehow jog along; one cannot hit upon the great actor in embryo by interviewing him for a hour or so or by looking at his paper-qualifications.

The dearth of scenario-writers is also a great obstacle. The difficulty about Indian life as a back-ground for romantic films is there and I do not see how it can be got over. The technical art may be learnt through study of western methods and we have great literary men who may be induced to take

up this work if there is money in it. But how to have the materials for a sensational and thrilling love-story,—how to introduce striking situations in which men and women lay bare their inmost feelings at a critical point of their life: The cinema cannot be realistic but it should have sufficient basis in reality to make the spectator willingly suspend his disbelief for the time being. If the story is full of glaring improbabilities, of impossible situations, the audience is bound to condemn it.

24—30. Morally harmful films I have already indicated. Suggestion of crime through films is very rare. When in Calcutta there was an epidemic of robberies with the help of cars some ten years back the fault was laid at the door of the cinema which portrays similar scenes often enough. But this was perhaps going too far as the robbers who were apparently men of intelligence could probably devise the means out of their own brains.

Certification of certain films as "For Adults only" would give them an undue advertisement and attract crowds to an undesirable film.

Certain Indian films exhibited in England give a wrong picture of Indian society in emphasising only the backwardness and comparative barbarism of certain sections of Indians. I have in mind one missionary film in particular which I believe was being shown in England with a view to raising money for missions in India.

Censorship in this country should never be too strict, for one must not forget that people go to the cinema to be entertained and films which are elevating from a moral point of view or even absolutely blameless can never be sufficiently attractive. We have to allow a considerable number of sex films to be exhibited, keeping in mind what exactly they are focussing interest on.

34. A central board would be useful in cases where there is divergence between different provincial boards. But a single central board will not probably be sufficient for the whole of India when one remembers that it is not the same film which is exhibited in every Province and the audience is not the same all over the country. The audience in Bombay, for example, must be very different from what it is at Lucknow. The educational institutions ought to be adequately represented on the boards, not only from the point of view of the moral or immoral influence on youths but with a view to examining the aesthetic value of each film and see if in doubtful cases it should over-ride a Puritanical consideration. The cinema has an aesthetic importance which cannot be overlooked and may be made use of for a certain amount of literary education.

### **Oral Evidence of Professor N. K. SIDHANTA, Professor of English, Lucknow University, on Wednesday, the 7th December 1927.**

*Chairman:* You have experience of cinemas, I suppose, both in Calcutta and in Lucknow?

A. And in England too.

Q. When were you in England?

A. From the middle of 1920 up to the middle of 1923, and I have seen the cinemas there and here.

Q. Do you see any appreciable difference in the standard of films shown there and in this country?

A. No, none whatever, I have seen the same films here which were shown there. They were very popular in Cambridge and London.

Q. As regards what are known as sex films and criminally suggestive films, and films which depict sex instincts?

A. They are absolutely the same. Some of the films though are probably not brought to India, I think.

Q. Did you hear much objection in England to these films?

A. No, none whatever.

Q. Are they not harmful to young people?

A. I should not think so.

Q. Is that the public opinion in England? Does it disapprove of such films being shown?

A. I don't think people take the trouble to regard the cinema as so very educative. It is more or less an amusement for the masses.

Q. But would not such films be harmful?

A. I have never heard that opinion expressed in England, at least it was not the opinion of an average undergraduate at Cambridge.

Q. You are a professor of the University here. What sort of effect have these films on the students here?

A. I don't think they have much effect on the students. Most of them go to the cinema merely to have something to talk about and pass their time. I don't think the boys take such films very seriously. Our students are generally about 20, and a number of them frequent the cinemas merely to spend a couple of hours in the evening and for something to talk about the next day.

Q. If you think they talk about the pictures they see, then pictures showing nudity will make an impression on them. Do you think it is healthy for the boys?

A. I don't think they talk about nudity. They will talk about the story and say that a certain part of it was interesting and a certain other part was not and so on. If they want to talk about nudity and such things, why should they think of the cinema, they can get hold of novels and other books.

Q. But still you have heard just now what the lady said?

A. I do not agree with one word of what she said. For instance, when she said something about the difficulty of taking children with their parents, the task is very simple. It is not every day that parents come across objectionable films. If the parents don't like the film, they have simply to leave the theatre. Moreover you certainly know something beforehand about the play you are going to see.

Q. You think they are over nervous?

A. The horrors may have some sort of effect on young children, but certainly not on boys and girls of 13 or 14. I have seen, for example, young children being taken to circuses, and on returning home they have tried to imitate some of the gymnastic feats seen there and met with accidents, but they would be very young children below, say, twelve years of age.

Q. You don't mind adventures being shown? And if the children see love scenes you have no objection to it?

A. I mean children will not have the opportunity to imitate such love scenes.

Q. Will they not try to create opportunities and learn the tricks?

A. I don't think so.

Q. You say the pictures are exaggerated?

A. The realities of life exaggerate. I don't say there are no objectionable films.

Q. Probably you cannot say one in how many?

A. No.

Q. You think that what the people may object to may be confined to a very small percentage of the films?

A. Yes.

Q. You believe in the use of the cinema for supplementing the education given in schools and colleges?

A. In the University it would have no place; it is all right for giving elementary information.

**Q.** Even scientific films?

**A.** If a man doing the B.Sc. course sees certain phenomena represented on the film, it may make a vivid impression upon him, but I don't suppose it would give him anything new, because he is getting the very same thing in a far more intensive form in the class room. But if a man has no knowledge of the subject at all, then it might be useful.

**Q.** You think it might be useful in the school course?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Do you know if the cinema is at all used in England as an adjunct to the class room?

**A.** I think there are education films, but I don't think it is regarded there as a regular official adjunct. But sometimes cinema films are shown in class rooms in England.

**Q.** Have you visited any studios in England or Germany?

**A.** No, I have not been to any studio.

**Q.** Have you seen Indian films?

**A.** I have seen "The Light of Asia" and also quite a number of other Indian films like "Savitri," "Nala Damayanti." But I saw one film in England called "India" which I did not like at all. It was, I think, a missionary effort, and it gave a perverted idea of India.

**Mr. Coatsman :** Was it Mr. Lowell Thomas?

**A.** I forget the name. It was simply called "India."

**Q.** You don't remember who produced it—the language of the captions?

**A.** Yes, I remember some of the captions.

**Q.** Was it American or English?

**A.** I believe it was English, not American. Of course, that was a definitely propaganda film and I don't think it represents the average run of films shown about India.

**Chairman :** But are there many films shown about India at all?

**A.** Very few. Perhaps some incidents may be introduced or an Indian character introduced.

**Q.** Then you are satisfied with the censorship as at present?

**A.** I am quite satisfied.

**Q.** And you don't think there is any need for stricter censorship?

**A.** Certainly not.

**Q.** And as regards Indian films, have you any suggestions to make as to how to make them more attractive?

**A.** First of all the technique of these films is very bad at present. We need good producers, good actors and actresses, and good stories also. Now all these require talented people, if not geniuses. If we take the difficulties one by one, say to start with the question of actors and actresses, which is of course the most troublesome, we cannot hope to attract really decent women to take the parts of leading actresses until we have really decent men and producers who have sufficient importance in public opinion to be able to control the thing very satisfactorily. I know something about the production of "The Light of Asia" and another film called "Incarnation." Recently they produced it at Udaipur. What they tried to do was to try and induce respectable Indian ladies to take part in the films under proper chaperons. And I believe they succeeded to a great extent and if we can induce fairly cultured people or at least educated people to take the part of the women, the men actors will be more easy to get. They will need to be trained as the art of the cinema in this country is absolutely in its infancy. The films I have seen, I am thinking particularly of the mythological films, are very badly done. The part of Savitri was hopeless.

**Q.** That was produced in Italy?

A. Was it? Not the film I saw. I think the film was called "Savitri Satyavan." At least the parts were taken by Indians were very badly done. The character of Savitri was entirely travestied.

Q. Then what should be done to induce good people to come forward?

A. Well, you need proper producers. If the producers have sufficient importance and weight in the eyes of the people at large, who are likely to send their sons and daughters to be actors and actresses, then they will agree. Take for example the case of the amateur theatrical productions in Bengal. Tagore stages a number of dramas every year in aid of his institution and he gets the very cream of society in Calcutta to take part in his productions. They act in public of course. There is no bar to anybody getting admission. Nobody has absolutely any objection to take part in these productions simply because they know that where Tagore is in charge of these things, they are bound to be properly done. I don't expect Tagore to become a cinema producer, but I take him as an example of what can be done if you have really responsible producers.

Q. Therefore how are we to get the producers of the type you have in mind?

A. Well, if it is a paying concern you might induce even a Tagore to spend some of his time on this. He is very old now. But there will be others.

Q. You mean people of his type. You cannot get a Tagore always. Now the question is, it is a paying proposition for those who are in the field, in Bombay for instance?

A. But it is paying there because they have chosen people, actors and actresses to take these parts, to whom they have not to pay very much. If you get really desirable men and women, the cost of production would be increased and state help may be necessary.

Q. You think a little state help would encourage the coming in of good producers?

A. I should think so, certainly.

Q. What sort of state help?

A. Well, state help in the production of Indian films. I would not have definitely protection against foreign films but I would make it easier and cheaper for the Indian films to be produced by us, say by abolishing the duty on raw materials. It won't be quite so easy in the beginning to make it obligatory on the exhibitors to show Indian films but we should have that in view, ultimately to make it obligatory; if we should find they are not willing to accept these we should have to make it obligatory to accept at least a certain percentage of these films. Unless Government is prepared to do that, we won't get the producers to take up the work, and without the proper producers we won't have the actors nor the technique. Everything depends on the producers. And the expense. Take the production "Ben Hur" which is one of the most expensive productions of recent years. They had to take all their actors to Italy and wander about from one place to another. This method may be necessary for producing a really good film here. Of course, I don't think that films based on contemporary social life can be successful in India. That I have indicated in my note. I think we shall have to go back to the past. But to get the historical or mythological setting it may be necessary to take them all over the country, wherever the proper background might be. That means expense.

Q. And you think Government should come forward to help in a way?

A. Certainly.

Q. I suppose you advocate cheap loans to producers?

A. Yes, loans on nominal interest and helping them to send really good people abroad to learn proper technique. Give them scholarships so that they may learn the technique and come and work with the producers, not drift away.

Q. What about the scenario writers and story writers?



A. Well, I don't think we entirely lack talent in this country. Of course, there again I must repeat what I have already said, that stories based on contemporary life in India are bound to be uninteresting. We must have some sort of romance and sentiment introduced into contemporary films. It will not do to represent the average humdrum life of India. And we cannot introduce romance and sentiment without being untrue to Indian life, so we would have to depend upon the past. What we need is, of course good historical novels or good historical dramas. Not wedded to historical accuracy at all. I should not be misunderstood there. I don't think that in a historical novel accuracy is all-important. What is mainly important is that no gross improbabilities or inaccuracies should creep in and it should present, at least in its general outlines, a fairly adequate idea of the period which is represented. I am thinking, of course, mainly of English historical novels and dramas in which historical accuracy is not insisted on and the appeal of these books is not lessened thereby, nor their utility. Take Scott for example. His novels are not historically impeccable. Some of them very much the contrary. Yet one cannot impugn their value as literature for that reason.

Q. Do you think that for producing such films as you have in mind, any Government action is needed?

A. In the beginning it may be. For the producer will always cut down his expenses and anything tolerable which is not absolutely trash he would accept, rejecting perhaps better and more conscientious work—better I mean from a literary point of view—simply because it is not quite so cheap. Government help therefore might be of value.

Q. You mean some sort of guarantee that the cost would be met by them?

A. Yes, help in that direction. I would not, of course, have a state bureau for producing scenarios. That is not what I mean.

Q. Some central body that scenario writers might indent upon?

A. I mean for encouraging the production of good historical dramas and novels, not for writing history. Of that we have plenty. So many books of history are being written every day.

Q. Not about ancient India?

A. Quite a number on that also. Some in the ordinary text book sort of ways and some even in the shape of scholarly books. We have every year a number of scholarly books published on Ancient India. That is the field which seems to attract the research worker most. But we have very few good historical novels or dramas.

Q. You have given us such a good statement that I don't think there is much to ask.

Mr. Green: I am very interested in your written statement. I think you did yourself an injustice when you said it was scrappy. And I have not much to ask you. You refer several times to the fact that romance in the western sense is not prevalent in home life in India, and you seem to think that such romance is inevitable to make a good film. I do not know if I am representing you correctly?

A. Well, the word "romance" is an ambiguous one there.

Q. I am thinking actually of love?

A. Yes, love and the sentiment of love,—I would not go so far as to say "passion" exactly. The sentiment of love is very necessary in the sort of novel which should make for a good film. I know, of course, thousands of good novels in which love does not play a prominent part, but the art of the cinema, as I have tried to indicate, is not exactly the art of the ordinary drama. The absence of speech does a lot to make it exaggerated in form, to lead to over-acting and it is far easier to bring out the feelings of love and make that interesting than to make other sentiments of the heart equally interesting.

Q. I rather think that you almost take up the position of the American producer who said it was no use making a film of Mount Everest unless you

introduce a love interest! But don't you think it is possible in India for Indian films to be produced with the love interest, if there is any at all, in a very subordinate part?

A. But I am taking it as a business proposition. We should have to think of attracting the public.

Q. Do you think that the love interest is necessary to attract the Indian public?

A. Well, I should think so. I should say it is more necessary to attract the Indian public because after all why do we read romance?—because it gives us something which we do not get in actual life.

Q. That then, I take it, is why you say "In India most Indian youths have to be contented with its vicarious experience."

A. That is exactly so.

Q. I put this to you—do you personally think there is any harm in this rather novel idea being made very vivid in India?

A. You mean the attraction between men and women?

Q. Many Indian gentlemen told us that love is a thing not to be encouraged: at any rate that love before marriage should be definitely avoided.

A. Oh, I would not agree with those gentlemen certainly.

Q. Well, those gentlemen certainly think that the western film as shown, is bringing a perverted taste into India?

A. Well, then, they would have to object to so many western things that have been introduced, including mills and industrial concerns and so much of the benefits derived from western civilisation.

Q. I know a very orthodox gentleman who is greatly in favour of mills but who does not approve of films?

A. They are simply trying to look backward.

Q. Your point is that it is impossible to stop the clock?

A. That is certainly my idea and all that we can do is to see that we get a fairly good type of romance which it is possible to screen, and stop the reading of pornographic novels.

Q. You think that if they do not get this, they would find something else?

A. Exactly, because there is not the same censorship on the novel, and I don't think because it is shown on the screen it will have a worse effect—it will just make it more vivid. But for the young men whom I have in mind, men of 20, it doesn't much matter. I think things revolved in the imagination can be far more baneful.

Q. I was very interested in your reply to question No. 15.

A. I dashed off the thing very hurriedly so I don't know if I have contradicted myself.

Q. The point I was referring to is the difficulty of getting actors. You don't see how you can get over the difficulty unless the Indian Government chooses to send them to Hollywood or if there is a great centre in this country?

A. Those are the two alternatives.

Q. Now it is possible that we may recommend that the Government in this country should start a studio for making not commercial films, but films for health propaganda, education, agriculture and such like public utility films. The various local governments are already spending a considerable amount of money in the different departments that are turning out rather amateurish work.

A. I have seen such work here,—some of the propaganda work; public utility films, relating to cholera, malaria and so on.

Q. Are they good?

A. Well, they are good for the audience for whom they are intended—absolutely illiterate people. As films they are bad.

**Q.** Do you think that they are good enough for those people who saw the films or would better technique have a greater effect?

**A.** Well, they were interested all right. But a better film would certainly attract more.

**Q.** But if a central studio did prove to be feasible?

**A.** Wouldn't there be difficulty about producing films which would be suitable for all parts of India?

**Q.** Very little difficulty. You can produce almost anything in the studio—the Grand Canal of Venice was produced in the studio. But assume again that this is feasible, that either local provincial idiosyncrasies can be satisfied in the studio or the cameramen can go to the different parts of India, I take it you would like to see a central studio of that nature, because it might lead to a great improvement in technique both among actors and among producers?

**A.** On the other hand, if we mean it mainly for these illiterate people, there are certain superficial features of these films which might be lacking in the higher class of films produced in the central studio. What I mean is the central studio will be dependent, I take it, practically always on the same batch of actors and actresses. They won't have different batches of Bengalis and Madrasis.

**Q.** Oh, I think they would.

**A.** They would have different batches of actors to produce films for the different provinces? If that is so, the objection would be obviated to a great extent. For to appeal to the illiterate it is very necessary that they should see actors and actresses of the province that they know. Without that I don't think it would have any appeal for them at all.

**Q.** I quite agree with you. But there again, assuming we get over that, wouldn't such a studio produce exactly what you suggest here, a great centre of film industry in this country and thereby attract all kinds of young men, some of whom may have a genius for acting?

**A.** Well, you know the art of acting in the amusement films is really different from the art of acting in the educational films and I would not think that the people who would be very helpful in the professional cinema would learn quite so much from this studio. Cameramen might learn or the producer might learn certain things but the actor himself will not perhaps get sufficient coaching.

**Q.** An American expert told us that acting hardly mattered at all. It is only the face that counts.

**A.** That is what they say. If you have got a film face.

**Q.** And I don't quite see why a man who can act a difficult part cannot act the simple part required in a propaganda film?

**A.** The propaganda film would not need so much play of emotions. It will be more a matter of fact and the movements and changing expressions and the art of feeling, as a matter of fact, that has got to be learned. I take it this art of acting has to be learned in the same way as the art of literature has to be learned.

**Q.** It hardly applies to the cinema, we have been told by experts. Because you have a short scene—you tell the actor or the actress exactly what is wanted—just the right expression. It is not like a stage play where they have to be on the stage for an hour or half an hour at a time?

**A.** Then what sort of help would they get by going to the studio?

**Q.** The studio would attract a certain amount of actors and actresses?

**A.** Oh, certainly—and there you would have a nucleus. In that way it would be of immense help.

**Q.** And gradually those people who had received some sort of training might go out and disperse and take up professional work?

**A.** Quite.

**Q.** That is a thing you would like to see?

A. Yes.

*Colonel Crawford:* In connection with what you said about the standard of films shown in the west and the standard of films shown in the east, I have seen both in both countries. Big films are shown of course in all countries. What I would like to get at is the quality of the smaller films. Did you see any second rate films? I have not myself. I am trying to find out?

A. What do you mean by smaller films.

Q. Well, the cheaply-made films?

A. Well, I don't think I have seen cheaply-made films. One has such a wide choice in England and one can always go to the best known films.

Q. Yes, that type of film goes out to both places. They fill up their programmes. They fill one programme for a week with a good film and then for three or four weeks they show trash. I was wondering whether there was any difference in the standard of trash shown in England and the standard of trash shown here?

A. Well, I think it is mostly films of the better type which come out here. The films which have been earmarked as star films.

Q. Well, I am definitely under the impression that the market out here is not very remunerative and that you can only make a commercial proposition of it by buying cheap films—very much what they call in America 'old junk.' You have no evidence of the fact?

A. No, I have not.

Q. Now, I was interested in your question on films of Indian life. Am I to understand that there are no incidents in the ordinary everyday life of the Indian that have anything dramatic in them?

A. I have not said there is none, but still there is much less of material than you would get from the ordinary life in the west.

Q. It is rather a monotonous type of life?

A. Oh yes, the struggle for life is much harder and we have far less of a chance for social amenities.

Q. Mr. Green took you up on the question of actors abroad—sending them abroad. There is some difficulty I think in getting men trained at Hollywood. At least, I imagine, there would be?

A. I know of Indians who have been to Hollywood.

Q. Yes, in certain proportions?

A. If you send them in crowds there might be difficulty, but you could send them to Germany.

Q. Germany apparently, so far as I can understand, from the photographic point of view is probably the best?

A. That is what I have heard too.

Q. And you would prefer a training ground in India to going abroad?

A. Well, I wonder what form that can take in India. Of course, for educational films it may be all right.

Q. Well, that is the sort of idea I have got. If all the local Governments combine and they find that they have enough finances for a first-class absolutely up-to-date studio with all the up-to-date machinery, the scenario men, the cameramen, the scientific department for development and all that?

A. Where would you get the men to man such a studio? You would probably have to import your teachers just as the other departments do. It would mean enormous expense, wouldn't it?

Q. Well, that of course is a question we would have to go into.

A. From what I have heard a cameraman would cost about Rs. 2,000 a month—I should say even more, a first class man.

Q. An absolutely tip-top man would cost about £30 a week?

A. Yes, Rs. 3,000 or Rs. 4,000 a month. That means an enormous expense if we have to equip a really first class studio with men of that type starting from the producer and the cameraman . . .

*Q.* I would not suggest this unless you find the money already being spent meets the expenditure.

*A.* I think the other way of sending our men to Germany or America would be more valuable because our young men would not only have seen the art of acting but would have seen those countries and would have known the relation of social life to the cinema, and if the social life there is represented in an exaggerated way. They will come back with a better outlook and they will be better equipped than by just studying technique in the studio. I would prefer the former method to the latter though there are difficulties in the way. There is not very much to learn so far as the art of acting itself goes.

*Q.* That apparently lies in the hands of the director?

*A.* It is the director who has to be sent abroad mainly. Those are the more important people.

*Q.* Apparently culture is not necessarily required to be a film star?

*A.* I should say it is necessary where a good historical film has to be represented and that is what I have in my mind.

*Q.* But you want culture in the direction and scenario writing and in production and not so much, possibly, in acting?

*A.* I have done some acting, only in amateur dramas, and probably cinema acting is something different. When you have to stage a historical play you have to know a good deal about the life of the period which is sought to be represented,—quite a good deal. Cinema acting may be different.

*Chairman :* Of course, you have to speak there, but in cinema you do not.

*Mr. Green :* You have got to do just as the director tells you to.

*Colonel Crawford :* I notice in your replies to Mr. Green you laid some emphasis on the necessity of films for each province being acted by individuals of the province?

*A.* I had in mind the illiterate classes. That is not necessary for the cultured audiences; they can quite well understand the differences of setting and all that.

*Q.* It has struck me that the film industry in India is faced with a good deal of limitation. It has got a limited market, there are only 350 odd cinemas. It is limited because of communal feelings which cut out a good deal of available films, and it has also possibly got the provincial limitation of local likes and dislikes?

*A.* That only when you take into consideration the illiterate people who at present do not frequent the cinema, at least so far as my experience goes. So far as my experience goes, I think if you put down 10 per cent. of the audience as illiterate even that is too much.

*Q.* Then you say we need not be frightened of that?

*A.* I am not frightened of that so far as it concerns the cinema as a source of amusement as it is run now. What I was thinking of was the educational film meant for the illiterate people.

*Q.* I notice in your written statement, which I also found very interesting, you do rather object to films of the type in which Annette Kellerman or Mae Murray or Pola Negri figures.

*A.* Certain scenes in them may be endorsed, that is what I meant there.

*Q.* You are inclined to think that our censorship is a little lax in certain directions?

*A.* Diving scenes in which Annette Kellerman is constantly indulging might be endorsed. Of course, it is always diving that she wants to show.

*Mr. Neogy :* Are you prepared to accept the statement that the average cinema pictures shown in this country which come mostly from America do not correctly portray life in the west?

*A.* I must confess I do not know anything about American life.

*Q.* From what you have seen in England can you say?

A. It does not represent the best of that life certainly. It represents what I take to be a good part of average life, the life of the lower middle classes say.

Q. What percentage of the people for instance in England?

A. I was thinking of the romantic . . .

*Chairman* : Passionate love making, scenes of luxury, drinking bouts . . .

A. In passionate love making there must always be exaggeration. There are night clubs and there are cabarets, and so far as the picture of cabarets goes, I think the actual cabaret is as bad as the picture. It is not every one who can go to the cabaret . . .

Q. They lead that life?

A. Yes.

*Mr. Green* : The lower middle classes go to the cabarets frequently?

A. I did not mean that. I did not catch *Mr. Neogy's* question then.

*Colonel Crawford* : Does even the average person go to the cabarets?

A. It is a fairly expensive thing. When I was in London the cabaret was just coming into fashion. I had been to a cabaret in Paris and it was quite an expensive business.

*Mr. Green* : It is a luxury?

A. Yes. It is not every one who can afford it.

*Mr. Neogy* : You do not find cabarets in every picture in India?

A. Very, very rarely.

Q. And similarly pictures of the underworld—are they also very common, or are they rare in India?

A. Common I should say. They do occur sometimes.

Q. So that taking the average, do you think that the pictures shown in India misrepresent life in the west?

A. That is a very general question. What do you mean by life in the west?

*Chairman* : I will put it to you this way. The complaint is that people seeing these pictures gather the impression that the average westerner leads such a life.

A. If it were the illiterate classes frequenting the cinema they might gather the impression; but I do not think the audience which frequent the cinema—the audience of college students, that probably is the minimum level to which I would put down the audience—I do not think they would make this mistake. The illiterate people do not follow the story even.

Q. The point is it may represent actual life for certain people.

*Mr. Neogy* : What effect can these pictures have upon the illiterate people for instance?

A. You mean American pictures?

Q. Yes.

A. It would have no effect on them because they would not be able to follow the story. It is the worst that can happen.

*Chairman* : Nor can they afford to see it?

A. No. I do not think it has any effect on them.

*Mr. Neogy* : What do you think of the quality of the pictures that are shown at the present moment in India? Is the quality getting better or worse? You were absent from India for a few years. Have you noticed any difference in the quality of pictures since coming back?

A. Acting I think has improved. As a matter of fact, *Mr. Green* has given me a new light . . .

Q. I am confining myself to one particular aspect, has the moral tone improved?

A. I should not say it is improving and I would not go so far as to say it is going down. Pre-war life in Europe was certainly not the same as life

in Europe at the present day, and tastes have gone down some people say, but I am not prepared to say that. I am prepared to say it is changing and probably that change is reflected in the cinema to a certain extent.

Q. But there is no remarkable change?

A. Well, certainly we have a greater variety of films. I am thinking of the days when there was only one picture house in Calcutta. In those days we could not have so many films brought out. Now-a-days I do not know exactly how many picture houses there are in Calcutta, there are certainly 10 of these picture theatres. Naturally we have a much greater variety: a good many more films come out now. Whereas formerly they could afford only dramatisations of very famous novels which would attract people immediately, now they can bring out films of many different types, serials, the so-called social films, adventure films such as those of Douglas Fairbanks, and so on.

Q. You have stated that the cinema keeps young men away from harm?

A. I think reading a bad book and revolving that in the mind is far more harmful than seeing the scenes which have been censored first and then allowed to be presented on the screen.

Q. In view of the fact that the cinemas are at the present moment mostly located in towns, don't you think that there are far other opportunities for people to go astray than the cinema?

A. Certainly.

Q. And that it is possible to exaggerate the evils . . . ?

A. Too many, as a matter of fact, I should say. Even with a residential university we feel that.

Q. And if Government are at all anxious to improve our morals there are other directions to which they could usefully turn their attention?

A. Perhaps. It is for the Members of the Legislative Assembly to point out.

Q. It has been said that there is a possibility of our having a very good market in foreign countries for Indian produced films, in England for instance. What do you think of that? Have you seen any Indian film in England?

A. The only one, as I have told you, is that "India." "The Light of Asia" I saw in this country.

*Colonel Crawford:* What is your opinion of "The Light of Asia"?

A. It is not quite so well done as it might be. Of course, I have some special knowledge of that period and that always does a good deal of harm to the enjoyment of a historical film. I seemed to find inaccuracies in a good many instances, and that probably militated against my enjoyment of that film, whereas I think other men would have enjoyed it much more. I think it is the best Indian film I have seen so far, the best film produced in India representing Indian life.

Q. Have you seen any Indian dramatic performances in England?

A. I saw one called "The Goddess."

Q. Was it appreciated by the English audience there?

A. I think a very small handful of Englishmen attended it.

Q. And judging from that do you think that there would be any great chance of Indian pictures finding a market abroad?

A. I should not think so. If we produce films, it is to India we must look for a market.

Q. I do not know whether you have made that statement already. You have not heard any complaint in England from any Englishman that the films shown there misrepresent their life?

A. I told the President just now. The average Cambridge graduate never made that complaint to me.

**Q.** And the pictures shown there have, of course, been passed by the Board of Censors there?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** And would you have a different standard set up for India, or would you accept the certificate given by the British Board of Censors?

**A.** So far as moral tone goes. I should say that a universal standard is far better.

**Q.** You would not have a different standard set up for India at all having regard to the differences between the east and the west?

**A.** I do not think that it is necessary.

**Mr. Green :** What would you do in the case of a film that has been passed by the English Board, which raises a communal question?

**A.** I said only moral tone. I would not abolish the Censorship Board in India at all. It would be necessary and I think provincial boards too.

**Mr. Neogy :** So far as misrepresentation of the west goes, would you support the idea of India accepting the certificate of the English Board as a guarantee that there is no misrepresentation of the western life?

**A.** I should certainly do so.

**Q.** And that there is no necessity for further censorship, except for the purpose of finding out whether there is any local objection on the ground of communal differences or something of that kind?

**A.** There will always be some local circumstances which would have to be considered.

**Q.** So the work of the Board of Censors in India will be considerably lightened from that point of view?

**A.** Does not the Board of Censors here accept the British certificate? They do not recognise that at all?

**Q.** They examine every film on their own.

**A.** I think the work might be lightened to a great extent.

**Chairman :** If we accepted the British certificate?

**A.** That is a very responsible Board so far as I know, and if they pass a certain thing as unobjectionable from the moral point of view...

**Mr. Neogy :** The British Board consists of 3 or 4 members, very responsible men?

**A.** I know Mr. T. P. O'Connor is the Chairman of that Board.

**Q.** And here primary inspection is done by a subordinate officer who is paid a sum of Rs. 300 or Rs. 400 or Rs. 500 a month, and if he sees any objection then he reports to the Board and then only the members of the Board see any film. Don't you think that the care they take in England about these films is far greater than the care which is taken here, and from that point of view...?

**A.** I have not very much knowledge how censorship is carried on there, whether it is very thorough or not. I simply know that the composition of the Board is very good and respectable.

**Q.** And as a matter of fact, probably you would ask the Government of India to accept that standard for the pictures which have been passed by the British Board of Censors there without submitting them to any further examination here?

**A.** From the moral standpoint.

**Q.** Leaving the local authorities to raise any objection if they thought it necessary on local grounds?

**A.** Of course, being a schoolmaster I am perhaps more puritanical than others.

**Chairman :** I do not see any signs of that.

**A.** Probably I would have the same objection even if they were passed through the Board here. I think that the certificate of the British Board ought to be good enough for India.



*Colonel Crawford* : Would you insist on all films coming to India passing through the British Board of Censors in England? Some come direct.

A. Those will have to be censored.

*Mr. Neogy* : I am confining myself to the case of those films that have as a matter of fact been passed by the British Board.

**\*Oral Evidence of Dr. ZIAUDDIN AHMAD, C.I.E., Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Aligarh University, on Thursday, the 8th December 1927.**

*Chairman* : You have seen our questionnaire.

A. Yes. I am not an authority on all these questions of course.

Q. We want your assistance on the points raised in Questions 14 and 24, and I don't know if you can give us any assistance on the Indian film industry.

A. Except No. 2. I have only this to say from my personal knowledge that the cinema is getting more popular than theatres. The theatre used to be very popular but now the cinema is coming in very rapidly and people like to see a cinema in preference to the theatre. There are probably two reasons for this. The first is that the cinema is more varied. The second is that the cinema finishes early whereas our theatres go on till two or three in the morning.

Q. Moreover you get into touch with the rest of the world by means of the cinema?

A. That is another thing. Then as regards 6 (b) there is just a little thing I would like to say, that taking the educated classes the kind of film which will appeal to them will be good specimens of sports and games, such as wrestling; or the illustration of a well-known drama; these are the things which will appeal to educated people. The kind of thing which will appeal to illiterate people will be fables, well-known Indian fables. These fables illustrated by means of the cinema will appeal to the uneducated more than any other thing.

Q. Do you see any objection to mythological films being encouraged? I will tell you why I ask you this question. There was a young man in Peshawar who considered it would be offensive to Muhammadans.

A. We have such a school of thought but they are in a microscopic minority who object to pictures of any kind. They would not have any pictures in their rooms and they would not say their prayers with a rupee in their pocket because there is a picture of the King on the rupee; but they are a very negligible minority. In most cases it would not offend. For example, we have got a cinema in our university, a cinema of our own to show pictures.

Q. What use do you make of it?

A. Well, we cannot get good films but we purchased the apparatus; we have electric power in our university but the trouble is we don't get good films.

*Colonel Crawford* : Have you a budget grant for the hiring of pictures?

A. No, we have not got that, but I wrote to several persons to get these films from some other miscellaneous expenses but we could not get good films.

*Chairman* : You want good educational films?

A. Yes. We get other things but we don't like them.

Q. Do you know that there is a firm in Lahore, Patel & Sons, which publishes such educational films.

A. I know, but I haven't seen their films.

**Q.** Well, we saw some, they were particularly good and I wonder they are not known more widely.

**A.** They don't advertise. I have been communicating with certain firms in Germany and America to get these films. But coming to the educational side, I find by experience that you can illustrate a subject by means of these films I think more vividly and in a better manner than you can by means of simple lectures. I will give you an illustration. The Railway Board some-time ago put up a film on agriculture. By looking at this one was impressed more strongly than can be done by means of illustrations. Even in the case of villagers, if you show them these things by means of films they will be more impressed than they would by means of agricultural demonstrations.

**Q.** Some doubt was expressed by the Inspector of Schools here as to the use of films in purely educational work; he thought the magic lantern might perhaps serve better.

**A.** I will give you a very good illustration. Take the case of astronomy. In astronomy you cannot get films showing the motion of the stars and so on. I gave lectures to general students and the public who know nothing about mathematics or the higher theories by means of the magic lantern; but I found by experience—now I have got certain films by which I can illustrate the whole of the solar system by rotation, and I found that that appeals more than the stationary picture; a moving picture always appeals more, that is only natural it appeals to young people and others more effectively than a stationary picture. Of course there are certain things you cannot show by means of the magic lantern, but wherever it can be shown, in my opinion it ought to be shown. Take the case of geography. If you could illustrate by means of the cinema such geographical phenomena as volcanoes, the boys would understand it much better than by any other means. Even as regards history, if some of these battles could be shown by means of the cinema—if it were possible—then that would appeal to the young mind more effectively than anything else.

**Q.** For instance, the battles of Alexander the Great, which could be very well illustrated by such means? So you think the use of the film for educational purposes will be a great advantage?

**A.** I think so.

**Q.** Both in colleges and schools and also for the general public.

**A.** Yes. And then you could get most of the schools together and have some general lectures. A big institution like ours can afford to buy apparatus but smaller institutions cannot.

**Q.** You think there must be an agency to distribute films to educational institutions and public utility propaganda organisations?

**A.** Yes, and I think it ought to be done by the Education Department. That is the work of the Education Department and in my opinion they ought to have a special grant for this purpose in their budget, to purchase films and to distribute them among various schools. I also have in mind a kind of travelling agency going about showing films, because every school cannot afford to buy their own films.

**Q.** A lorry or bus carrying the films and showing them at different schools?

**A.** Yes, which we could show without the use of power because in some places there is no power available. By means of rotating bands you could generate electricity for this purpose.

**Q.** I suppose it also involves the production of Indian films for educational purposes?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** You think there should be a studio run by the Government for that purpose?

**A.** The present agency for producing and also advertising is not strong enough, so I think the Government ought to encourage these things, and

the way they can easily assist it is by giving grants to special companies or special individuals on very easy terms, either without interest or at a nominal interest, so that they may pay it back after some time.

**Q.** There are two ways of doing it, which would you prefer? Whether it would be wise for Government to start a studio themselves in which these things could be produced, or whether they should call upon existing producing agencies to produce films, the Government paying them some amount, subsidising them?

**A.** I think that in provinces where the industry already exists, they may be given grants, but in provinces where there is no such industry, the Government might start a kind of pioneer industry and a studio of its own and then hand it over to private individuals in working order, because you cannot expect the people to put their capital into an enterprise where the results are doubtful.

**Q.** But it won't be a commercial proposition?

**A.** Not for some time. This will not be so, however, if, as I suggest, the Government starts a pioneer industry and then hands it over to private individuals to run.

**Q.** Of course the advantage of such a procedure is that the Government will be able to import experts who can be availed of by private agencies also.

**A.** Actors and so on are not usually available and the resources required to start with will be very very great, beyond the means of private individuals.

**Q.** You would prefer therefore a Government studio as a pioneering model?

**A.** Yes, and then Government could hand it over to private individuals later on.

**Q.** Now there is another aspect to the question. There are various Governments, more than 9 provincial Governments, and the work of educational films will be duplicated if each province sets up its own agency. What do you say to the idea that all provinces should pool their resources together so that they might have a good central studio in common?

**A.** I am rather in favour of having it done by the Central Government instead of by Provincial Governments because the Central Government will be able to advertise more effectively than Provincial Governments and, as you said yourself, Sir, the cost of duplication will be avoided because you can reproduce as many as you like.

**Q.** The objection taken to that is that provincial peculiarities will not be brought out by such a studio. I don't know why, but still this suggestion has been made. For instance it is said, taking an agricultural film, that the U. P. would prefer rather to see on the film men working in the field in their own style of dress and everything, rather than a Madrassi being shown on the film; it would appeal to them more.

**A.** Of course first of all we shall start it on an All India basis, then as soon as it becomes a going concern the provinces will take it up later. All the provinces are not likely to take it up immediately, because they do not realise the advantages and the Councils will not accept a proposition of this kind, but if it is started by the Central Government, then the provinces will come to realise its value and gradually establish their own concerns.

**Q.** At any rate for distributing foreign educational films and for the purposes of a central exchange, the Central Government would be better qualified?

**A.** That is my opinion.

**Q.** Say for instance you get some good films from Germany or America, the Central Government can get them and distribute them to various provinces; they can act as a co-ordinating agency?

A. Yes, that is my opinion, and the Central Government has got plenty of funds. Last year they put down 95 lakhs for Miscellaneous items out of the savings from their educational grants. They could easily give 10 or 15 lakhs for this purpose. This saving of 95 lakhs in the Education budget the Government of India wanted to spend on excavation and the Assembly objected to it.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* You are on the legislature of this province: would you support a thing like this in your council?

A. I would not support it straight off, but if I see the thing is a working concern and has good prospects 2 years later, I would certainly support it. There is little chance of its being carried now, but when people realise that they want some provincial peculiarities to be put in, then they will come forward.

*Chairman:* Have you seen any Indian films?

A. I have seen several films but I cannot say whether they were Indian.

Q. You think the Indian film industry should be encouraged?

A. I am strongly of that opinion because we require to illustrate our own flora and fauna and various habits of the people. Then we want to send our own films outside India to illustrate Indian ways abroad, specially to the countries of the British Empire. That is question No. 22 in which I am very interested. That is, there ought to be some kind of exchange of films between different parts of the British Empire so that we may know each other's conditions more intimately than we do at present.

Q. But I suppose you have heard—they say Indian films so far produced are not of such a quality as to appeal to other countries.

A. Of course just at present, but I think with these improved methods which you would suggest things should improve.

Q. Do you think Indian topics will appeal at all to Western audiences?

A. I think they rather like to look into these things. They would of course be sick if for the whole of one evening they say nothing but Indian films, but for part of the time I think they would like to see Indian films.

Q. You mean a certain proportion?

A. Yes. If say, 10 minutes, are devoted each night to the showing of Indian films, I think it will be appreciated.

Q. Were you in England when "The Light of Asia" was shown there?

A. I was in England in 1924 last time.

Q. I believe it was shown after that.

A. Particular films may not appeal; different persons like different kinds of things.

Q. But I mean you cannot now expect to find a market in Western countries for Indian films, not yet, till your industry has been placed on a very firm basis?

A. But if you produce films under Government management and put them into the market at cheap rates to begin with, people would take them.

Q. It is worth trial?

A. Yes, it is worth trial. Take the case of South Africa and India. From what I have heard, it was the Deputation that brought about better relations between the two countries much more than could be done by correspondence. I think if we show these films and show the really good side of our life in South Africa a good part of the prejudice which at present exists will disappear.

Q. You think there should be a reciprocal arrangement between the different parts of the British Empire?

A. Yes.

Q. An interchange of films?

A. Yes. If I may be allowed to give a little example, you can remove a good deal of prejudice by means of such films. I was in Paris and I saw

one film there in which they attempted to remove colour prejudice from the minds of Parisians. In that film there was a man with an oven and in that oven he was just making boys and girls to put them in nurseries and they were all for sale; and he charged for the dark coloured ones double as much as he charged for the white ones, which he explained by saying that much more fuel was needed to make the dark coloured ones. That was an attempt to remove colour prejudice. If you can only show the good side of each part of the Empire to the other parts, then these strained relations which at present exist will disappear.

Q. Care however will have to be taken as to the nature of these films. You cannot show the miserable life in your villages?

A. Some people have also told me that in South Africa they have no true idea of Indian life. They know nothing about Indian life except the cool labour which they have there and if the good side is shown to them they will probably change their opinion about India.

Q. And for that a reciprocal arrangement is needed between the Governments?

A. Yes.

Q. The trade cannot do it?

A. The trade only look at things from the point of view of pounds, shillings and pence. They do not consider general utility.

Q. Except on a basis of such reciprocity arrangement?

A. I do not know but I was told there is, I think, in England a kind of British Empire Producing Company producing films to illustrate various parts of the British Empire. I have not seen it myself—I was only told about it.

Q. Now as regards question No. 22, do you think, apart from any such reciprocal arrangement, that we should participate in the policy of giving distinct preference to Empire goods?

A. On account of our political situation we come more in contact with the habits and life of people in other parts of the British Empire than we do with Germans or Russians and so on; and therefore it is more desirable and people will appreciate it better because they have heard something about them and they will enjoy the films.

Q. But are you prepared to give preference to Empire goods produced in Britain, Canada, Africa or Australia merely because they are Empire films without a reciprocal arrangement?

A. That is, whether they purchase from us?

Q. Supposing no question arises of their being British Empire films, do you want to give differential treatment as a matter of policy apart from a reciprocal arrangement? I can of course understand an exchange of films; but this is not a question of exchange. Supposing, to take an illustration, you put a 15 per cent. duty on all films, but in the case of Empire films you reduce it to 10 per cent.—would you advocate such a policy without its giving you any advantage?

A. In the case of educational films that is a thing I would take from any country because we want the best, but leaving these educational films, if you want to illustrate the life and habits or scenery of the country, then I would rather prefer to have the scenery and people of countries of the British Empire and give them preferential treatment in every possible manner.

Q. Although it may not be advantageous to the Indian film industry?

A. I thought it would be advantageous to both, and the reason is that in our courses everywhere, in history, for example, when we go outside India, the next step is the British Empire and the next step to that is the history of the world. So I would rather like to have British Empire films illustrated in some shape or another.

**Q.** But the point stressed against it, which I want you to realise and on which I want your opinion, is this. So far as films go, they are all foreign films whether they come from Britain or America. What you want is to encourage the growth of the Indian film industry. Merely substituting Empire films for American films is no good to India.

**A.** From the point of view of the industry.

**Q.** From the point of view of the industry, we merely substitute one foreign agency for another, so long as your own goods cannot stand on their own legs and compete with them.

**A.** Of course so far as helping the Indian industry is concerned, it should be encouraged, but when you have to take foreign goods, then in that case the preference may be given to British Empire goods compared to foreign goods.

**Q.** How would you give preference?

**A.** This might be done. Supposing you get a thing made in India. I would rather buy a thing made in India; but if I have to purchase a thing from outside I would rather purchase from countries within the British Empire than from other countries.

**Q.** Provided the cost is not exceeded?

**A.** Yes, provided I do not have to pay more: it is all a question of the pocket.

**Q.** The second condition is that it must be of the same quality?

**A.** Yes. Both quality and price must be taken into account.

**Q.** But that is a matter for the trade. What is the line for Government to adopt?

**A.** The Government, I think from the point of view of general education and general considerations, ought to encourage the industry of the British Empire, the film industry, by giving them some preferential treatment compared with countries like Germany and America, because we want to illustrate their life, their methods of life, their dresses and so on.

**Q.** That of course will come under educational films; but supposing they are merely entertainment films and not of an educational character?

**A.** If we have entertainment films only then the people would like to see what is best; they don't care where it comes from. I was speaking only from the educational point of view.

**Q.** From the educational point of view, as you said just now, we want knowledge from everywhere. Why give preference to the British Empire?

**A.** No. I don't like to exclude films from Germany of the educational kind, but when we come to explain the life of the people.....

**Q.** But cannot that be done by mutual arrangement between the Governments rather than by preference?

**A.** If it can be done by mutual arrangement, so much the better; but if you cannot do it and we have to buy certain films, then I would give a little preference to films made in the British Empire because we come in touch with the people of other parts of the Empire much more than with the people of other countries.

**Q.** That is quite true. So far as entertainment films go you are not prepared to impose any restrictions on the trade taking what films it likes?

**A.** There are certain restrictions which come in under section 24.

**Q.** That is another matter. This is purely because of the country of origin—you would not give any preference, you must leave it to the competition of the trade?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** For more reasons than one?

A. Because they would like the best and the cheapest.

Q. But in regard to educational films you won't make any difference?

A. No.

Q. So far as conditions in the Colonies and in India are concerned, you think some arrangement should be made so that there may be a free interchange of films. Have I understood you correctly?

A. Yes, because we want to know the other countries more intimately and their life. We are not to remain content with what we merely read in the books.

Q. I suppose you don't go to the cinemas much?

A. Not much.

Q. But, as a great educationist, I am sure you will be able to speak with some authority about the effect the film has on the student world?

A. There are two kinds of films which I would like to be censored. There are some American films showing naked dancing, and such films should not be shown, not only here but in any country. There is also another class of films in which the criminals are made heroes and idolised. Such films should not be shown in any country.

Q. I don't know if you have seen the rules which govern the Censorship Board. The rules cover the points which you have in mind.

A. Probably they are not properly enforced, because I have seen some American films in which the criminals were idolised.

Q. Have you seen any films in this country which are distinctly objectionable.

A. I saw some in Calcutta some time ago. They were American films, and I thought they ought to be censored, because they showed a kind of naked dancing.

Q. But I daresay you attend Opera Houses where opera girls come?

A. There are certain kinds of dresses like the evening dress, but some go beyond the point of decency.

Q. What do you say to Opera girls appearing? Would you have them in India?

A. There are two opinions about this and there are some people who would object to pictures of any kind.

Q. You see that in some theatres Opera girls appear in a semi-naked fashion and show their skill in dancing, high kicking and so forth. How are they in any way different from what you see on the screen?

A. I think if you want to be strict in regard to censorship, then such things should not be allowed. But it is very difficult to draw the line. Anyway, the gentleman who has got the power ought to use his discretion.

Q. But there is no censorship for theatres where persons actually appear in flesh and bone, whereas in the film you merely see the pictures?

A. But the cinema pictures are circulated everywhere, whereas Opera Houses exist only in large towns. Another thing is, these Opera girls give their performances in English theatres to which a large majority of the Indian population do not go.

Q. How is it good for Englishmen themselves?

A. That is rather difficult to answer.

Q. If a thing is morally good for Englishmen, it must be morally good for us as well, but while the Englishman does not complain in his own country about these American films, why should Indians come to his rescue?

A. There are different ideals in different countries.

Q. But considering it from the point of view of pure morality, it should be more the duty of the Englishman to take care of his morality. It is they who should take action and not we. When the remedy is in the hands of the Englishmen themselves, why should we go to their rescue?

A. When we are thinking of pictures to be shown to our Indian boys, I think we should be careful to see that we do not show them naked or semi-naked pictures on account of the bad effect on the people at large.

Q. That I understand. But the remedy seems to lie more in the hands of the Englishmen themselves. Don't you agree that they have got their own cousins in America who produce these pictures and who have got the same civilization, which, as we are all taught here, is superior to the Indian civilization, and is it not for Englishmen themselves to represent to their cousins and take action?

A. In England and other European countries there are two classes of cinemas, one class which is visited by really respectable people and the other by ordinary people. So when ordinary pictures are brought here, people in India get a wrong impression and they think they see the specimen of an ordinary English life, which is not the case.

Q. Why should not the Englishmen appeal to America? Why should they appeal to India? Is it because India can be made to do anything that they like?

A. For instance, if you show an Indian bazar picture in England with an Indian woman, people there will not be able to find out whether the woman belongs to a respectable family or to the coolie class. Such things I would rather not like to be shown in England.

Mr. Neogy: Do you mean that only the respectable life of the west should be shown in India?

A. I cannot answer that question. All that I would say is: we should show here pictures which are shown in theatres which are visited by respectable people in England.

Chairman: Why do they produce such pictures and dump them on us, and ask for protection?

A. If I were a censor, I would stop these also.

Colonel Crawford: Your major point is that the western ideas of morality, as shown in the films, may be very lax, and there is no reason why India, from her own point of view, should allow such a lax moral standard. Is that so?

A. Yes.

Chairman: Do you consider it lax?

A. It is rather difficult to answer. For instance, if one lives in a country for a long time, one gets accustomed to see people and things in a particular way. I am accustomed to see European ladies in a particular style, and if an Indian lady comes to me in European dress, I would readily talk to her, but if an Indian lady come to me in Indian costume, I will refuse to talk to her because I shall feel shy. Similarly, in India we are not accustomed to see a particular kind of film and perhaps we get wrong ideas.

Q. Does not the remedy lie in education?

A. Education helped by good films. I would never allow bad films to be imported into this country or to be sent abroad for exhibition.

Q. My point is: let them stop it at the source. England will take such films by the dozens, but they only ask India to stop them. Suppose the British Board of Censors have passed a particular film, would you take it as good enough for India?

A. No, I would have a further censorship in India, and I would not be content with the British Censorship, because we have to use our own judgment and see if it is good for this country.

Q. When are we to improve and come up to their standard?

A. Suppose they take a Hindu and a Muhammadan hero. From their point of view it may be all right, and they will look at the picture with great reverence, but if the same picture is shown in India, it will probably be disliked.

Q. But talking of western films, who are we to set a standard for there?



A. We cannot set a standard for the western people, but what we can insist on is that only a good class of western films should be shown here.

Q. Can you tell them that Opera girls should not come here and dance? Are you prepared to allow Opera girls to come here and dance?

A. But their case is rather different. Those performances will not be seen by a large number of people.

Q. What is there to prevent people from going to such performances? In large cities a lot of students see such performances? In Calcutta and Bombay, for instance, a large number of students flock to the English theatres. Would the exhibitors consent to any form of censorship?

A. Such plays ought to be censored by the university authorities. Besides, there are some people of an advanced type in this country who would probably welcome the English balls, dancing and so on, while others who are not sufficiently advanced would not like to see them.

Colonel Crawford: If because a few advanced people see these things in their true perspective and yet they are having a bad effect on the general mass of the people, does it not justify Indians in saying, 'We won't have such things here'?

A. Yes, I would rather stop such things if I had the power.

Chairman: But my point is, the Englishmen are not bold enough to appeal to their own people in their own country, but they appeal to Indians to protect them?

A. I would rather look at the question in this way. When we take the western civilization, we must take what is best for us, and it is for us to choose, and if we see that a certain thing is not good, we should not take it, whether the English people stop it or not; that is of course their business. But we should make every attempt to take only the best in the western life. We cannot keep out what is not good, it is their look out to remove from their own country what is not good.

Q. If you are arguing on that basis, many of our countrymen do not like our men to dress in English style. Would you stop English dress being used?

A. Those who do not like the English dress, don't wear it. For instance, all these Khaddar people not only don't like English style but even English made clothes.

Q. They don't stop it by law?

A. We should try to avoid legislation and force in these matters. We should take only what is best for us.

Q. You want to avoid by law the introduction of films produced in the west by westerns exhibiting their own customs and manners and asking India not to take them?

A. Provided we consider that those things are injurious to our civilization.

Q. That is the point of view you will press?

A. Yes. Because in India we have our own civilization as well as the western civilization, and we have to find out a kind of union of the two, and therefore we have to take the best from both.

Q. Of course, you agree that the Indian ideas as to manners and customs in some matters are very very conservative and ancient, are they not?

A. Yes, they are.

Q. So simply because the bulk of the people are ignorant and uneducated, you ought not to take up their standard and apply it to prevent the introduction of such films?

A. You have to keep abreast with the times, but always keep in mind that no injury is done to the people of this country.

Q. Is there anything else you wish to say?

A. With regard to the Central Board, I think the Government of India ought to pay the money at present, and the Provincial Government, I am sure, will come forward later on.

**Q.** Now, as regards the question whether there should be one Central Board at the port of entrance, or there should be separate provincial boards, what have you to say?

**A.** If we have only Provincial Boards there may be difficulties. One province may adopt one standard, while another may adopt a different standard. Therefore, there should be a Central Board, but the Provincial Governments may, if they like, set up their own Boards. For instance, there are certain films passed by, let us say, Bombay, which may not be suitable for the N. W. F. Province. If the Censorship is done in an organized manner by a Board assisted by an executive officer, that would be better. But in the first instance, the censorship should be by one authority which must have universal currency, and then leave it to the provinces whether to re-censor the films or not. There should also be one paid officer, because the whole Board will not be able to do the work. The Members of the Board can lay down the policy, but the inspection must be done by a paid officer. The present practice which exists in Bombay is quite good.

**Q.** There are some complaints that films which ought not to have been passed are passed. Don't you think it would be safer if the films which will have universal currency in the country were examined by two officers?

**A.** Yes, it will give greater confidence, because there are certain points about which Hindus and Muhammadans are very susceptible, and so if there are two officers, it would be much better. The Members of the Board should lay down the policy, they can also give decisions in matters of dispute, but the inspection of films can be done by paid officers. They must of course be good men so that they may be above temptations of all kind.

**Mr. Coatsman:** You talked about the necessity of Government help in developing the industry, and when you were talking about the way in which Government help might be given, were you referring only to the production specifically of educational films or to the production of entertainment films as well?

**A.** I was thinking of the educational films and the industrial films, because they have also got some kind of educational value. As regards the general entertainment films, Government may give some kind of help, because we will have to compete with foreign markets, and if we could produce good films in India it would be better.

**Q.** What sort of lead could Government give?

**A.** The Government ought to start a kind of pioneer industry, they ought to have a studio or factory of their own to produce films, and when that studio or factory is fully developed, then it can be handed over to some firm or firms. Or if any individual or company comes forward and starts a similar industry, Government ought to give some sort of financial assistance to it, in the same way as they give aid to other industries.

**Q.** Let us take the point about the Government starting its own studio and then handing it over to a firm. Of course, it would be handed over to a firm on commercial terms?

**A.** It ought to be done on a commercial basis. It may not be paying to the Government in the beginning, but as soon as the industry becomes self-supporting and begins to pay, then Government should hand it over to private enterprise, just as they are doing in regard to other industries.

**Q.** We must confine ourselves for the moment to the cinema industry. If Government were to start such an up-to-date studio, the cost would be pretty high, and so the firm or company who would take it over would have to put down a considerable sum of money?

**A.** If it is going to be a paying concern, people will certainly come forward to purchase it.

**Q.** Have you studied the conditions under which production takes place in India now?

**A.** If the concern is going to be a paying one, then there will be any number of capitalists who will readily come forward and invest money in it. If it is not paying, then nobody would care to look at it.

**Q.** Your idea is that Government should pioneer the work?

**A.** Yes, but if they find that it is not paying, then Government should keep it for demonstration purposes like many other institutions.

**Q.** Do you think the film is of sufficient importance to merit the diversion of Government funds which should go obviously into a hundred other more useful channels. Suppose the Government put up a scheme for helping the handloom industry costing say about 50 lakhs. Would you rather have that 50 lakhs given to the handloom industry or to the cinema industry?

**A.** If you have to choose between the cinema and the loom, I should certainly prefer the handloom industry.

**Q.** Would you agree then that any money that Government devotes for this purpose should be diverted from grants for education?

**A.** Money should be spent for this purpose out of the savings of the Education Department. Government saved about 95 lakhs last year, and they were spending money in various directions.

**Q.** I don't remember that Government ever saved so much?

**A.** There was a talk about it, and they were proposing to spend so much in excavations.

**Q.** That was not to be spent, but that was to be an endowment?

**A.** I think I read somewhere in newspapers that they were going to spend so much.

**Chairman:** 50 lakhs were to be set apart and the interest on it was to be spent for excavation work.

**Mr. Coatsman:** As a matter of fact, I remember that in the last budget Government made provision for increased education in the N. W. F. P. where it is badly needed.

**A.** Yes, I read about it in the papers. But if I have to choose between a grant to education and a grant to the film industry, I would rather give it to education, because it is a more urgent problem, whereas cinema is a kind of luxury industry.

**Sir Haroon Jaffer:** In the meantime you would see crores of rupees going out of this country by way of films, if not crores at least lakhs, going to foreign countries to support the film industry?

**A.** It is rather a question of comparative importance.

**Mr. Coatsman:** But the point I would like to know is, if you have thought out this thing in all its bearings, first of all the amount of money that the Government will have to spend on it, and secondly the relative importance of the cinema industry?

**A.** Although such highly desirable form of amusements may not be necessary, still if I can spend it on cloth and food, I should prefer it. A direct grant to educational institutions would be much more productive than the cinema, because we want to give food first.

**Q.** Now, on the Frontier we were told that certain more staunch Mussulmans believe that moving pictures offend against their religion, I think only one man said this. What do you think of it?

**A.** We have a school of thought which objects to pictures of any kind, so much so, that they do not say their prayers if they have a rupee in their pocket because it has got the King's figure on it. Such people are more numerous on the Frontier than here.

**Mr. Neogy:** Is there any cinema in your city?

**A.** We have got an apparatus. Occasionally the cinema comes and exhibits pictures but there is no permanent theatre. They come once or twice a year.

**Q.** Do your students go to Delhi or to other places to see cinemas?

**A.** Some of them go to Delhi on Saturdays and return on Monday morning. They also go to the travelling cinemas which sometimes visit our place.

**Q.** Are there any restrictions imposed by the university about the students going to cinemas?

A. We send our Proctor first, and if he passes the pictures, then we allow our boys to go; but if he objects to the pictures, we don't allow our boys to go.

Q. That applies to travelling cinémas only?

A. Yes.

Q. So far as the Delhi cinémas are concerned, your boys are free?

A. Yes, how can we control them?

Chairman: Are they all hostel students?

A. We have about 80 per cent. of the students living in our hostels and the rest are day scholars, but this restriction applies to day scholars also. No students can visit the cinémas without our permission. They must either take an individual pass or take a general permission, and the latter is not given unless the university authorities are satisfied that the films are quite good.

Mr. Neogy: Do you think that such restrictions are in vogue in the other universities in your province?

A. I think in Benares they have similar restrictions. In fact, in residential institutions they can impose such restrictions.

Q. It is open to the educational authorities in other places to take similar action?

A. It is impracticable in Calcutta and Bombay, because the educational authorities will not be able to control.

Q. Now about the harmful effect of the cinema upon the students. I take it that you would agree with me that the effect varies with age and experience and education. So the harm might not be very great in the case of the advanced students.

A. Yes.

Q. There is very little restriction about the reading of novels.

A. No. Unless the novel is very bad and then we proscribe it. We say such and such novels should not be taken by the students. We have got our own rules and we enforce them.

Q. That applies only to residential students? You cannot restrict every boy in that manner?

A. In our case, day scholars abide by the same rules as residential students. At least they are expected to. But they are living two miles away.

Q. But they can go to the railway bookstalls and see picture magazines there and they can read any book they like when they go out.

A. Yes, you cannot control their outside movements.

Q. From that point of view would you be prepared to support a classification of films, say for instance certain films to be shown only to persons above a particular age?

A. That would be impracticable to enforce. Whenever you show films in big towns, people of all ages go,—the father goes and takes his children,—friends, students and the public all mix together. It is possible only in a small place like Aligarh where the university exists by itself independent of the town, but you cannot enforce it in other places where the university is inside the town. We are situated two miles away from the town.

Q. Now about instructional films. I think you are aware that at present they come mostly from Germany and America. Those are the two countries that specialise in that line. You would not make any discrimination against them?

A. No, for educational films I would not.

Q. Now about the Central Government studio. You said that, for the time being, you would not mind having a central studio run by the Government of India. But there are Provincial Governments we have come across, one at least, where the opinion of some of the local officials was in favour of Provincial Government studios rather than a Central Government studio.

Then you would leave it to the option of each Provincial Government either to have their own arrangement in whatever way they like or take advantage of the central studio if it is started?

A. I said you ought to start a central studio: if the Provincial Governments make use of it so much the better. But there are provincial peculiarities they might like to illustrate: then let them do it. But most of the Provincial Governments are not sufficiently alert to these things.

Q. Now about western civilisation. Don't you agree that our aim should be to give a correct idea of the actual state of things outside this country in our educational institutions? That is to say, is it right to keep back certain aspects of life abroad?—from the strictly educational point of view.

A. If you take it from this point of view whether we should give every point of view, it is all right. But the corollary which comes out of it is that when they see anything which belongs to the west, then they begin to imitate it unconsciously thinking perhaps that it represents the best part of western life. It is therefore our duty to save our young men and show them what is really the best. When people are sufficiently advanced—for instance if I see a picture that is bad, I take it to be a kind of illustration of some peculiar kind of life.

Q. But that will be keeping them in ignorance of the actual state of affairs. Would it not be better to let them see the things and warn them against initiating them?

A. Of course, that will apply to people who are already advanced in culture like yourself or myself. But when you consider the students, you must remember that they do not make any differentiation. Whatever they see they consider to be the best and they try to imitate it.

Q. But, for instance, in history they have to read certain things which are not always very desirable. And from social novels again they can draw lessons which would not be very good for them. But you do not seek to censor them? You teach history and you allow them to read these social novels?

A. No doubt a few students read social novels, but they have read a good many other novels also so they can read them in their true perspective, but in the case of these cinemas which are seen by every student, they are not likely to take it in any true perspective.

Q. Not even those that are allowed to read novels?

A. If you begin to show a picture and say, "this is rather poor kind of life, don't copy it please"—I don't think anyone is likely to take notice. So I think it is desirable, if we want to teach them to learn something from western civilisation, that they should not see the worst side.

Q. So, you would like them to carry the impression that there is nothing but the very best in western civilisation?

A. No, this is not the idea which is in my mind. The idea which I have in my mind is this, that in the case of our boys we should show them what is best and later on, when they have developed and have got sufficient culture, then you can show anything.

Q. Then you come to the question of age which is beyond the student's age—would you say above 18?

A. When the man has seen the world, the good and the bad.

Q. You won't mind if such people were to see all these things? It won't produce any harmful result?

A. No. For example if I saw a good thing or a bad thing, I would be able to differentiate.

Q. Then you are practically imposing the standard suited to the younger generation upon the whole population?

A. Yes, because you cannot show a cinema in which you can differentiate and since the younger people are more important than the amusement of the illiterate people, therefore the standard ought to be strict.

*Colonel Crawford:* May I take it that a large proportion of the adult population in India, as regards knowledge of the world, are very much like children?

A. Yes, they are backward. They have got very little general knowledge not included in the curriculum.

Q. That is one of the factors we have to bear in mind in this connection?

A. Yes.

Q. May I take it also that the cinema makes a far wider appeal than any other form of art—than the theatre or the novel?

A. Whatever you see with your eyes actually, that appeals more. It does have a wider appeal to the public.

Q. In the cinema you can see much more in a short space of time than you can see on the stage. That is another fact we have to bear in mind. Now, I just want to clear up in my mind certain points which you have mentioned. Am I right in thinking that you consider the censorship lax in certain directions?

A. Yes.

Q. And you have outlined the two particular directions in which you would tighten it?

A. Yes.

Q. Now, another point I would like to refer to—so far as I understand your opinion it is that India should be allowed to judge her own standards to prevent possible injury to her peoples?

A. Yes, that is at the back of my mind when I advocate censorship.

Q. Your view is: "if other countries choose to do things, that is their look-out, I am not out to bolster up western civilisation. If other countries choose to show such things, it is their look-out." I quite agree. Now, on the educational side, I gather that you attach a good deal of importance to visual instruction particularly through the cinema?

A. Yes.

Q. Well, now, is the cinema in your opinion a very valuable factor in elementary education?

A. Yes, it is rather an expensive way of doing it but if you can find the money.....

Q. Do you think the cinema is more expensive in imparting general education than teachers,—what I would call mass education?

A. The cinema cannot take the place of a teacher. But the cinema is really an adjunct, like wall pictures and school apparatus and school appliances. So I would put the cinema as more powerful than any school appliances that we can show to the boys.

Q. Well, Mr. Coatsman asked you whether out of the money available for primary education—and after all we know at present it is very much less than what our needs are—are you of opinion that a portion of the available money should be spared for visual instruction of this nature?

A. To that I replied that whenever you want to compare these things, you have to take up two definite things before you: but looking only to primary education supposing there is a budget allocation for primary education—2 lakhs say—the question is whether we should make primary education more wide and open more schools and employ more teachers or whether we should have cinema instruction in a few selected schools. Then my opinion in this matter differs from the general opinion in that I don't think that in India the time has come when we should make a wide expansion of primary education. We should make education as wide as possible but not compulsory and try to give better education to a limited number rather than afford bad education to a very large number.

Q. But where finance is limited, would you allot a proportion of it to visual instruction?

A. Yes, of course not for schools, but we have a lot of special allotments for particular subjects in school, and this should be one of the subjects—try this experiment as well in any school situated in Lucknow or Allahabad or one of the other big towns.

Q. Education is not only a question of learning, there is technical education as well. Now, to give education in agriculture to the vast mass of people, do you think that visual instruction is possibly a preferable method of education?

A. I think last year the Railway Board put up an agricultural cinema, and I went to look at it, and I thought it really illustrated the whole thing more effectively than the demonstration in the fields, to which only a few people can go and they simply go and see the thing done under conditions which they cannot imitate.

Q. Well, now, from the point of view of education, you are in favour of a certain amount of money being spent on visual instruction?

A. Yes, and even to show it to the public. Give good cinema pictures to the villagers and probably they will see them.

Q. Do you think it would be a cheaper method of actually imparting agricultural education to the people than lecturers?

A. The initial expenses may be high but the running expenses will not be high because you can have one producing centre and the district and municipal boards might come forward to help in this matter, and some zemindars might produce them. If these things are available, then money will be forthcoming.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* In Bombay we have an entertainment tax—the Government takes the money and uses it for educational purposes. Supposing the Government of India does not pay money out of that fund which you have just mentioned, you think you would agree that such a tax should be imposed in your province for the purpose. It exists in Bengal and Bombay.

A. Bengal and Bombay are really more advanced than the United Provinces in the cinema industry. But if a tax of this kind is imposed in the United Provinces to-morrow,—I think the Council is not likely to pass it, but if you illustrate it by a Central Government and the people realise the advantage, then we shall get the advantages two years later.

Q. Well, the advantages are there in Bengal and in Bombay. You have got to follow it.

A. But for one of us—

*Chairman:* You mean if the money is spent on a studio of the sort you have in mind, there will be no difficulty in getting it passed?

A. Yes, and they will provide the money to purchase these things and teachers to run it and purchase small apparatus for this.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* If this industry is advanced, then the Government will get more revenue.

A. I have not calculated the financial side. But a pioneer industry is always a losing one.

Q. But you know that there are more cinema houses growing up every day.

A. In the end it may be a paying concern, but I think to begin with it will be a losing concern.

Q. But at least these that are here pay income-tax. At least you can ask Government to pay that portion.

A. This also is a question of relative importance. If I have to decide between two things, between the cinema and a grant to the university, I would never give it to the cinema.

Q. Why is there no board of censors here? Would you like to have one?

A. There are not many cinemas in the U. P. In some big towns you have got a few.

Q. If a board is started, I suppose public men will come forward to serve on it?

A. Yes, I think many people will come.

Q. You also, I suppose, will come forward?

A. Well, I won't have much time. Otherwise, if I had the time I wouldn't mind serving on this board. But this will be impracticable because the members of the board cannot meet together. The work should be done by a few paid officers.

Q. You have just said that the cinema is a means of instruction in schools. Would you prefer the magic lantern to the cinema?

A. Magic lantern pictures are the second best. The first is the cinema.

Q. But your educational inspector yesterday told us that they are the best, not the second best.

A. Well, that may be his experience. But my experience is as I have said. Even in the magic lantern pictures there are certain things which are moving—you just rotate it by the hand—and they appeal much more to the audience.

Q. To advance the film industry would you advocate the starting of some courses in cinema production as a necessary subject in your Muslim University?

A. We have got a dark room for photographic work for teaching the boys and if these things are started they could be done in the same way.

Q. There are degrees in other countries.

A. I don't think we will award degrees.

Q. Would you like to have the boys sent, by means of Government scholarships, to America and Germany, or would you like the boys to be taught here in some college of science or school of art?

A. If you start the industry then some persons will have to be trained.

Q. You say that if you start any industry then you have either to import people who know it or send our own men to be trained in foreign countries. Which do you prefer?

A. I would have both simultaneously. First import good men.

Q. You advocate that this should be done at Government expense?

A. It can only be done at Government expense otherwise nobody will give private scholarships.

Q. Not by the cinema producing industry itself?

A. No. I don't think rich people are so much advanced that they would give scholarships for these purposes.

Q. Do you think many boys will come forward from your college to take up this industry?

A. If you give a scholarship either in India or abroad, I can give you as many students as the number of scholarships you can afford to give.

Q. I was told at several places that there is this language difficulty about these films—what should be done in the different provinces? Would you like such languages introduced for the whole of India (showing paper)?

A. The provincial question will come in here, because in the United Provinces if you are illustrating, then these two languages are sufficient, Urdu and Hindi. In the Punjab also and the North West Frontier. But when you go to Madras or to Bombay or Gujerat, there of course—

Q. Then how would you solve this difficulty?

A. And you cannot have 20 different languages. I mean in certain countries—I have seen pictures in Strasburg, which is part German and part French, and they illustrated the pictures in both languages. In Italian also—in some places—in three languages. So we would have to illustrate



with at least two languages in Upper India. When you go to Bengal, then Bengali would also have to be there. They would not like it without Bengali. So that difficulty would immediately come and people would have to take up this thing on the provincial basis and put provincial languages there. And there is another reason for giving it because there is some kind of—not communal tension—but some kind of tendency to show civilisation of a particular type in these things and in certain places you have got the cinema pictures exhibited which may appeal to people of a particular class, so I think if these pictures are to be produced by the Government, then there will be probably a kind of fusion of these various pictures.

Q. I saw one "embracing and kissing" circular here of some theatre. "The Merry Widow." Suppose such circulars are distributed in your college to the students, don't you think that gives wider publicity to such indecent circulars and advertisements?

A. I haven't seen the circular. But if I find any circulars to be indecent, I stop it.

Q. Would you suggest that such circulars should be censored before they are published?

A. I have not seen what you are referring to.

Q. Kissing and embracing and all such things are shown in the circulars or advertisements. Would you like them to be distributed?

A. That is a thing which you cannot shut up our boys from because there are so many books in the stalls and so many things that they see, that they are now accustomed to it. Even if I like to stop it, I can't do it.

Q. Would you permit a person to distribute them in your college?

A. I would rather ignore a thing which I cannot effectively stop.

Q. Even if you know it is being distributed?

A. I can only say that a thing which I cannot effectively stop I would rather like to ignore.

Q. But personally you don't like such circulars?

A. Personally I don't like them.

Q. And they ought to be censored?

A. That is difficult, because when you open an illustrated paper you find any number.....

Q. I think you said something about the inspector of the provincial board in Bombay examining and passing films.

A. Yes.

Q. One paid inspector?

A. One or two. Preferably two, because there may be a personal prejudice.

Q. Don't you think that this is virtually the transfer of a discretion vested in the board to an individual?

A. You see, the board is always competent to lay down the policy but the board is never competent to act. Whenever action comes in, it should be done by individuals under the direction of the board. That is the usual principle of administration.

Q. I think sometimes these low paid inspectors are exposed to inducements by persons interested.

A. Yes, that is possible. But if you have good men and they work under the supervision of the board, there should be no difficulty.

Q. How can the board know if he is a bad man unless they have experience of him? Do you still advocate that there should be one man?

A. I would rather advocate that the work be done by one or two paid officers under the guidance of the board. Because the board in an honorary capacity can never act, they can only guide and lay down a policy.

**Q.** Would you like this board to be an official or a non-official one?

**A.** The boards may be nominated by the Government and consist of officials and non-officials. Of course the paid servants should be Government servants.

**Q.** You don't want them to be elected by the Legislative Councils of the provinces, or by municipalities?

**A.** I don't consider it to be very important.

**Q.** It is very important in Bombay and Calcutta.

**A.** I would rather leave it to one Government officer under whose jurisdiction it comes to make the appointments.

**Q.** Would you prefer a lady on the board also?

**A.** I am more orthodox in this matter. I am against ladies even standing for the council and so on, so I would not like to have a lady on the board.

**Chairman:** Now, will you kindly look through the instructions of the Bombay Board of Censors, which they issue to their inspectors, and see if you can add to it. No. 5.

**A.** I think they are very good, very comprehensive. The points which I have in my mind are all here.

**Q.** And the illustrations?

**A.** The thing is it should be judiciously applied. The rules are really good and the points I have in my mind are covered there.

**Sir Haroon Jaffer:** You have seen this book, "Principles of Censorship." Can you define what is meant by "suitable" for public exhibition?

**A.** I would define as "suitable" what is not included in No. 5. That is the only definition I can give.

**Q.** Do you think that the European and Indian conceptions of indecency and suggestiveness should be included in this interpretation? Take, for instance, a *sadhu*. A European would not like to see him half naked. In the same manner if some European ladies appear half-dressed and things of that kind, they would not be liked by Indians.

**A.** This is very difficult to answer. When you come to a particular illustration then you can always have a difference of opinion. I think what is formulated here is all right. If any person raises an objection, then, in the light of that objection, the question must be decided, and if the people take it all right, it is all right. But I think the rules laid down in No. 5 are all right and they are comprehensive.

**Colonel Crawford:** Do you consider those rules have been satisfactorily carried out in your experience?

**A.** They have not been satisfactorily carried out so far, because I have seen certain films which must have been passed by the censor, which I would not have passed if I had been the censor.

**Chairman:** Such things will occur in any institution.

**A.** Yes. But still if the rules were there and the Board was there, they could come down upon them.

**Q.** Unless the lapses are so numerous as to call for attention you do not think legislative action is necessary?

**A.** Yes.

**Written Statement of Mr. WALAYAT HUSSAIN, M.Sc., B.Sc.  
(Hons.), Lucknow University.**

1. No.

2. (a) Mostly educated Indians frequent Cinemas and at least three fourths of them are college student. Amongst the illiterate who go to cinema the

low class people are most conspicuous by their presence. This latter class of people frequent cinemas to see somebody kissing or hugging. They have really nothing to do with excellent conclusions which can be derived from the plot. They go back home with pernicious ideas and become more wicked. The rate of the tickets should be raised so that it may not be within the reach of the low class to be able to frequent cinemas.

(b) No.

(c) A small number.

3. Adventurous films and films of love stories.

4. Yes.

5. Cannot say.

(a) Not at all.

(b) If religious, they are popular.

(c) Cannot say.

6. (a) Surely.

(b) (1) Those depicting stories from national literature and history would appeal to the educated classes.

(2) Mythological to illiterate people.

7. Cannot say.

8. (a) No.

(b) Actors and actresses of sufficient technical knowledge are not available. Young capable Indians are available who can be easily trained either in India under experts (from England and America) or out of India. Facilities should be provided by Government and a large number of educated young men who are roaming about will be profitably employed. Training for a very short period will make us expert photographers and excellent actors. I am not prepared to believe for a minute that Indians are inferior in any way to other nations. What Indians want is an opportunity and if they get it they will prove worthy in every sense of the word.

It is true that we can get young men from noble families for the honorable profession of an actor but women from noble families will not be available for a quarter of a century to come. I think that young men should be trained to act as actresses so long as females are not available.

The film industry should at once be started under the patronage of the Government which will also solve, partially, the question of middle class unemployment.

9. Cannot say.

10. No knowledge.

11. Cannot say.

12. There is no amusement tax in Lucknow. To some extent it may prove a handicap at present to the exhibitor, but in my opinion it should be levied and the money thus raised should go to produce Indian films by Indians.

13. Cannot say.

14. Yes. Cannot say.

15. Cannot say.

16. No, suggested in 8.

17. Under the patronage of the Government. I am sure sufficient capital will be forthcoming.

18. Yes. Government should levy amusement tax and look to the training of Indian actors and photographers in India and abroad for a period of at least 10 years.

19. Cannot say.

20. (a) Yes. By all means.

(b) From the amusement tax.

21. Yes, a state agency should be created.

22. Yes, good English films should be encouraged.

(a)—(c) Cannot say.

23. (a) To a large extent.

(b) A Committee of the representatives of various Governments should be formed.

24. (a) Some foreign films have a baneful effect on the public.

(b) No.

(c) Licentious films have a demoralising effect on youths. Criminally suggestive films have a harmful effect on low-caste people.

(d) No.

(e) Cannot say and I suppose it is difficult to say.

25. Yes. Some films have a demoralising effect and they should never be permitted to enter India. What injurious effect these films have on a young man only the young man knows. For God sake, do not pollute our minds by permitting such films to enter India.

It makes the blood of a young Indian boil when he sees a princess of the East falling in love with a person of no importance from the West and at the same time when he sees an ordinary woman of the West looking scornfully at a prince of the East whom she willingly marries, when it is found that he is of Spanish origin. [Rudolph Valentino in "The Sheikh"]. Such plots hurt us and strict censorship of films is necessary.

26. (a) Yes.

(b) The *Namaz* which we Muslims offer five times a day has never been faithfully reproduced on the stage in the manner in which it is offered by Muslims. I consider it a mockery rather than acting.

27. (a) No. Yes they are unintelligible.

(b) Cannot say.

28. (a) (b) Yes.

(1) Criminal and licentious.

(2) Their standard of moral character is brought down.

29. Yes.

30. Yes. 14 years.

31. Yes.

32. Cannot say.

33. (a) No.

(b) May be for a short time.

(c) No.

34. (a) Yes.

(1) To bring uniformity and less expenditure.

(2) Cannot say.

(3) Representatives from all the provinces.

(4) Delhi.

(b) No.

(c) Does not arise.

(d) In the same way as the present Provincial boards are financed.

35. (a) Cannot say.

(b) The question of different centres does not arise.

36. (a) (b) Cannot say.

37. Cannot say.

38. No.

39. No.

40. No, no advertisement

41—42. No.

43. (a) Yes.

(b) To avoid licentious films coming into India.

(c) Central Board.

44. To a great extent.

45. (a), (b) Yes.

**Oral Evidence of Mr. WALAYAT HUSSAIN, M.Sc., B.Sc. (Hons.),  
Lucknow, on Thursday, the 8th December 1927.**

(To Chairman:) Now-a-days I am doing nothing. I am an M.Sc., and B.Sc., of the Lucknow University. I sometimes go to the Prince of Wales Theatre, but I go more often to the Elphinstone Picture Palace.

Q. Is it there that Indian pictures are shown?

A. Sometimes.

Q. How often are Indian pictures shown in the Elphinstone?

A. I saw only 5 or 6 in a year.

Q. Do you like them?

A. Yes, some of them, not because they are good, but because they are Indian.

Q. They appeal to you and people like you?

A. Yes.

Q. Although they were very imperfect in technique?

A. Yes, though most imperfect.

Q. And the Indian people like Indian pictures?

A. Yes.

Q. Are Indian shows more largely attended than western shows in the Elphinstone?

A. Yes, when we have some religious films people flock there, and in the case of European films when there is some prominent actor like Charlie Chaplin, Rudolph Valentino, etc., people go there simply to see him.

Q. Western films as a rule are not very popular with the Indian public unless they are of the kind you mentioned?

A. Yes.

Q. I mean by Indian people the masses.

A. Yes.

Q. Supposing an Indian film and a western film were being shown side by side, say Charlie Chaplin on the one side and an Indian film on the other, to which will the Indians flock?

A. If the Indian film is good, then people will generally go to that film.

Q. But they are of the class which you have now seen—you say you have seen 4 or 5 of them—supposing they are of that class, which would the masses attend?

A. People will be divided. I do not know what film they will go to in preference.

Q. You suggest here the rates of the tickets should be raised so that it may not be within the reach of the low classes to be able to frequent the cinemas. Which cinemas do you mean?

A. All the cinemas.

Q. You mean the European ones or Indian ones?

A. I mean European ones and American.....

Q. The price of admission should be raised?

A. Yes.

Q. Why do you think so?

A. As they are ignorant they get an inspiration from the films they see and they may be able to do some wicked deed. I cannot say exactly what would be the effect, and if it is shown for a year I think it will have an evil effect.

Q. Do they go much to these cinemas?

A. They generally go whenever they get these criminal films.

Q. But I thought you said that Charlie Chaplin and such other shows appeal to them more?

A. These appeal to the whole public, educated as well as the illiterate classes. But when there are criminal films, then the illiterate people go.

Q. How do they know that they are criminal films?

A. These posters tell them.

Q. Do you think they are able to judge from the posters?

A. Yes.

Q. These illiterate people—where do they come from?

A. They are spread over the whole city of Lucknow.

Q. What do you mean by illiterate people?

A. Shopkeepers and men of that type.

Q. You class shopkeepers as illiterate people?

A. I mean petty shopkeepers, betel sellers and so on.

Q. What is the harm in seeing those pictures?

A. As they are ignorant I think it will be more effective in making them do some rash action.

Q. What is it which the man sees which would bring him to some rash action?

A. Criminal films, as well as love scenes, licentious scenes.

Q. But what opportunity has that illiterate poor man to practise what he sees?

A. Any man can do anything.

Q. He cannot get wines, he cannot go to a cabaret club, he cannot go to a dancing saloon?

A. But he has got the street and the house.

Q. What does he do? Have you seen him dance in the street?

A. Not that, but they can do mischief in the streets.

Q. Have you seen them doing any?

A. I have not actually seen them doing mischief because I had no chance to see them, but when they are ignorant it is possible that they do so.

Q. When you have not seen even one instance, why do you blame the unfortunate illiterate man? Why are you afraid that he will do things which you have not seen him doing? How long has the cinema been in existence here?

A. The cinema has been established here I think about 5 or 6 years. I have been residing in the University Hostel and have been cut off from the city and therefore have not seen.....

Q. In the last 5 or 6 years you have not seen a single illiterate man do anything which he saw on the cinema. Is it a fact?

A. I have not seen, but they give vent to their feelings when a bad scene is shown.

Q. Why should they not enjoy the film?

A. Enjoyment is a different question.

Q. Do you enjoy such scenes when you go?

A. No.

Q. But you go all the same?

A. I go when there are good films.

*Q.* I mean men like you go?

*A.* Yes, but we can control. We are educated. We can control ourselves more than ignorant people.

*Q.* We have heard people say that it is the young college student who is really influenced by these cinemas. That is what some ladies say, and also some schoolmasters say.

*A.* Yes, they are also affected, but as I have said, children under 14 years of age are affected.

*Q.* You think they should not be permitted to go to the cinema?

*A.* They may be permitted to go but not to such films.

*Q.* You then advocate that certain films should be classed for adults only above a certain age?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Have you any experience of the Indian film industry?

*A.* No.

*Q.* Are these cinemas well attended in Lucknow, patronised?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* The other day we saw a theatre which hardly had half a dozen people.

*A.* It depends upon the film.

*Q.* It was a very attractive film in the way of love scenes and also of finish?

*A.* I do not know.

*Q.* Have you seen "The Merry Widow"?

*A.* No.

*Q.* Can you tell us whether you avoided it purposely?

*A.* I did not go because I had no time.

*Q.* Have you ever reported any objection you had to any film to any one?

*A.* I did not know the authority whom I should address.

*Q.* But were there occasions on which you would have objected?

*A.* Yes, there were.

*Sir Hasoon Jaffer:* In reply to question No. 26 you say that the *namaz* has never been faithfully reproduced. Was this misrepresented in the foreign films which come here?

*A.* Yes, I think so.

*Q.* And that ought to be rectified immediately, that is what you say?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* In answer to question No. 8 you say that young and capable students are available to be trained as experts. Will you yourself go if a scholarship is offered to you?

*A.* Why not? Not only myself but others of my qualifications will be willing to go.

*Q.* And it will be possible for you to take up this work of acting, etc.?

*A.* I may not be a good actor but can turn out good photographic work because I have had training in photography.

*Mr. Neogy:* You seem to have a very good acquaintance with the cinema?

*A.* I frequently attend.

*Q.* How often do you go?

*A.* I think 3 or 4 times a month.

*Q.* You take care to choose the films beforehand?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* And you find that the literature that is available is sufficient to guide you?

*A.* Posters sometimes give us guidance, but as I told you, when we know that there are some prominent actors in a film we go.

**Q.** And the illiterate people also judge from the posters?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** But a witness told us yesterday that even responsible parents have not got anything, in the nature of either literature or posters, which could direct them in the matter of selecting certain pictures for their children, that it is very difficult to judge the quality or the subject matter of the film by merely going through the literature that is available and the posters.

**A.** Yes, they cannot form an exact picture of the film, but in the case of the illiterate people, when they see some illustrations showing people hugging each other, they find it of interest.

**Q.** What proportion of the audience in the cinema theatres which you have seen consists of illiterate people?

**A.** I think one-fourth.

**Q.** Even in the Prince of Wales?

**A.** They do not go there.

**Q.** You specify the illiterate as also the low caste people who are liable to be misled by certain pictures. That is what you say in answer to question No. 24. What do you mean by low caste people?

**A.** Illiterate people may be either of high family, or they may be—I specify those men who are doing petty jobs, *e.g.*, betel sellers, kahars, etc.,—I take them to be low caste people.

**Q.** You think that the criminally minded and the immoral form a larger proportion among the low caste people than among the higher caste people? Is that your point?

**A.** The low class people catch the disease much more easily than the illiterate people of high family.

**Q.** You say the illiterate people when they see pictures of hugging and kissing on the placards are generally attracted to these shows. They are in your opinion generally immoral people?

**A.** I think so. Their tests tell us.

**Q.** Do they get any worse by going to the cinemas? They are already immoral.

**A.** They are of course immoral.

**Q.** They may become more immoral, is that your point?

**A.** Yes, and they affect others also.

**Q.** Have you tried to ascertain as to how far immorality has increased in Lucknow since the advent of the cinema?

**A.** It is not possible. If criminal films are shown for a year and then for one year we do not get such films, then the result can be judged by comparison.

**Q.** You have said that when certain kinds of pictures are thrown on the screen these illiterate people shout, and from that you judge that they are being influenced by those pictures in a very undesirable manner.

**A.** In particular scenes where it is not proper to shout, shouts from the low caste people show us their taste.

**Q.** What are the kinds of scenes at which they shout like this?

**A.** Nude dances. I saw one film in which the girl was practically undressed and they began to shout. I do not exactly remember the name of the film at present, but they began to shout.

**Q.** But in that particular case you could not ascertain beforehand the subject matter of the film by perusing the literature and the posters? It came to you as a surprise?

**A.** Sometimes of course. Generally, whenever I see they are good films I go.

**Q.** In that particular instance you yourself could not properly judge the subject matter of the film and you cannot say that the illiterate people went



there deliberately to enjoy those kinds of scenes? They happened to go there just as you happened to go there?

A. May be.

Q. It was not a deliberate action on their part to go and see those kinds of scenes?

A. They generally do it.

Q. On how many occasions have you seen people shouting like that?

A. I think about four times.

Q. For how many years have you been seeing the cinema?

A. For about six years.

Q. In the course of six years you came across only four pictures of that type?

A. Yes.

Chairman: What was the nature of the shout?

A. That I cannot say.

Mr. Neogy: Some sort of amused laughter?

A. Not that.

Chairman: May be a shout of condensation?

A. No. How can it be?

Mr. Neogy: Have you been to any show where there were a considerable number of European soldiers present?

A. Yes, once.

Q. Was there any such picture shown on that occasion?

A. I do not remember.

Q. You did not hear them shout at any scene where there was kissing, hugging or things of that kind?

A. I do not remember the film, but I once happened to go on the Christmas Eve when there was a rush of soldiers in the Prince of Wales.

Chairman: Did they shout at all?

A. No.

Mr. Neogy: We have heard them shout!

### **Written Statement of Mr. G. LIEBENHALS, Manager, Prince of Wales Theatre, Lucknow, dated the 29th November 1927.**

1. Yes I have a good knowledge of the film industry in India, having had the experience of being manager for a number of years of The DuCasse Film Service who were film importers and also having been the manager of The Picture House, Calcutta, Coral Picture House, Allahabad, and the Rink Theatre, Lucknow. I am at present in charge of the Prince of Wales Theatre, Lucknow.

2. (a) Educated Indians frequented the houses I have been in charge of. Illiterate Indians have always been conspicuous by their absence. I cannot see an appreciable increase in the attendance of the educated Indians.

(b) As I have always been in charge of cinemas situated in the European Quarters of the city, my audiences have naturally been 95 per cent. composed entirely of Europeans and Anglo-Indians. Those cinemas that are located in the Indian Quarters are patronised usually by Indians.

(c) Adolescents of an impressionable age about 20 per cent., children under 14 too negligible to mention say about 2 per cent.

3. Films produced in India appeal most to Indian audiences. They like serials too, while spectacular films also have a considerable following.

4. Exhibitors in India are certainly trying to do the best for Educated Indian audiences. As mentioned before the owners of Indian cinemas gener-

ally, but on serials and Indian subjects which the uneducated Indian can follow best.

5. (a) I am not in a position to state whether Indian pictures are readily available. Those that I have seen are not of good quality. They do not compare very favourably with films produced in any other country especially America.

(b) Although not well produced they are popular with Indians only. They do not appeal to Europeans.

(c) I am not in a position to answer the question.

6. (a) Yes.

(b) I think whatever the subject an Indian film well produced would appeal to all classes of Indians.

7. There is absolutely no difficulty in obtaining suitable films for the British troops. Indian troops could be placed in the same category of the audiences who attend cinemas situated in the Indian Quarter.

8. (a) As I am affiliated with Madan Theatres Limited for the supply of films, I am quite satisfied. There is certainly room for improvement in the producing line, which I consider is in its infancy.

(b) Follow the example of the American Producers. Get the Co-operation of all public and Government Departments build better studios with up-to-date equipment and with the natural backgrounds of Indian scenery and historic buildings Indian films would compare favourably with the world's best productions.

9. (a) I am just an exhibitor and I hire my films from Madan Theatres Limited. I am thoroughly satisfied with their service.

10. I am in association with Madan Theatres Limited and I have to take what comes along. The films supplied are on the average good. I again say I am satisfied with the supply.

11. Usually yes. But sometimes I receive a film late, which gives me no time for viewing same.

I have no suggestion to offer on this matter, as although I may not have the time to view the film, I have the satisfaction of knowing that it has been screened at Calcutta and several other important towns before it has come to me.

12. There is no amusement tax in my District. I dread to think of the day that a tax will be introduced here, as although we are running an up-to-date Theatre acknowledged to be the best in the U. P. it is difficult to make it a paying proposition.

13. My film suppliers inform me that they are paying heavy custom duties and so they are unable to reduce their film hire which is absorbing the profit we should be making. The encouraging of indigenous films will not help us a bit as European audiences are only interested in western films. The abolition of the amusement tax and lower custom tariff would greatly benefit the cinema industry. We would get films cheaper and we would then be able to improve our Theatre.

14. Yes, it would help the cinema industry, but these films would not have a general appeal to make it a success it would be necessary to get the aid of public bodies.

15. Yes. Conditions are very favourable.

16. No. Capital must be invested, talent and teachers must be imported before success can be attained. It would however take years to make up for the time lost. The other countries are much ahead in film production, and are still going ahead with new inventions and new ideas, etc.

17. I don't think people in India will risk an investment. This applies to almost any business in India at the present time. Much more so to the film industry which has not up to now proved itself worthy of the risk that will have to be taken.

18. Certainly, Government and Public Departments should give all the possible help they can.

19. I am unable to give you a very definite answer, but I should imagine that it would be very cheaper to produce films in India than in any other country.

20. Yes, I suppose it would involve expenditure from Government funds, but should it prove a success Government would be benefited greatly. It would also give employment to many and create an industry that practically does not exist now to any great extent.

21. The existing safeguard is all that is necessary. The people of any country would resent any endeavour on the part of the Government to control and arrange the amusement of the people as they think fit.

22. (a) If British films are good an exhibitor in India would prefer to have them to any other. It would not be necessary to force British films on any exhibitor by legislation. An exhibitor wants the films that help him financially.

(b) I don't see how it can help the Indian film industry.

(c) Indian films except scenics will not have any appreciable appeal outside India.

23. To a great extent, if interchange of locally produced films could be arranged.

*Social aspects and control.*

24. (a) I don't think so.

(b) I have not seen any, the censors at Calcutta and Bombay generally attend to this.

(c) Pictures showing the nude and anything suggesting immorality.

(d) Yes.

(d) Yes.

(c) No.

(f) Nil.

25. Films shown in European Theatres are quite fit to exhibit to Educated Easterners.

26. (a) Great care should be taken.

(b) I understand there was such a case at Delhi. I know of no other.

27. (a) I don't think so. Audiences that see Western films are usually intelligent enough not to form a wrong idea.

(b) I have no knowledge of this.

28. The Censors attend to this thoroughly.

29. No.

30. Certainly not.

31. Yes, quite satisfactory.

32. Yes.

33. (a) (b) It would involve a lot of inconvenience and probably a falling off in attendance.

(c) Yes.

34. (a) (1) I do advocate a single Central Board, with absolute power to either ban or pass a film finally either at Calcutta or Bombay because these two cities are importing centres.

(2) Yes considerable inconvenience if there were two or three Boards.

(3) A mixed representation of Europeans and Indians.

(4) Either at Calcutta or Bombay.

(b) I advocate one Central Board.

(c) The above answer suffices.

(d) As at present.

35. (a) Yes.

(b) I think the arrangement existing at present is quite satisfactory.

36. (a) I would suggest putting a man with the knowledge of the world in general in charge.

(b) I think the system would involve unnecessary expenditure.

37. (a) Yes.

(b) No.

38. Yes.

39. No.

40. (a) It is not necessary to censor posters and handbills.

(b) No.

41. Yes.

42. No.

43. (a), (b) As I am not an importer this does not concern me

44. The Press criticism would help considerably to improve the standard of films.

45. (a) I think the Board of Censors quite capable of dealing with the situation.

(b) Yes.

### **Oral Evidence of Mr. G. LIEBENHALS, Manager, Prince of Wales Theatre, Lucknow, on Thursday, the 8th December 1927.**

*Chairman:* How long have you been connected with the cinema?

A. About 12 years.

Q. You have been in the business both in Calcutta and here?

A. Calcutta. Allahabad and Lucknow.

Q. You are almost entirely in charge of all cinemas situated in European quarters?

A. Yes.

Q. You can speak to that with authority?

A. Yes.

Q. And there your audiences were mostly 95 per cent. Europeans and Anglo-Indians?

A. Yes.

Q. Do the illiterate people come there at all?

A. Very seldom, one or two.

Q. Almost entirely Europeans and Anglo-Indians?

A. Yes. Of course, we have a few students. They come along when we have pictures of Douglas Fairbanks, Charlie Chaplin, or Jackie Coogan, or something of that sort. The general picture does not appeal.

Q. General love scenes?

A. There is a little love in every picture.

Q. I am talking of passionate love-making. In your experience what percentage of these western films really contain passionate love-making scenes or scenes from cabaret life?

A. From cabaret life very, very little. I have to think about that.

Q. I do want you to think about that and tell us.

A. Cabaret life about 3 per cent. and I should think where there are love scenes.....

Q. Passionate love scenes. Take "The Merry Widow."

A. That is one picture perhaps a year like that, or once in three years.

Q. "The Merry Widow" was very good in many parts, but there were certain scenes which might have been omitted I thought.

A. Well, it has been played for years all over the world.

Q. Take a film like that. What percentage of films like that come?

A. Half a per cent. probably of the whole show.

Q. Like "The Merry Widow"?

A. That was extraordinary. They had to follow the play to a certain extent. Perhaps they exaggerated a bit.

Q. On the night we were there was any portion of this film cut off because we were there?

A. No. The whole thing was shown. We cannot do that. That is done in Calcutta.

Q. We saw the whole thing and nothing was concealed?

A. No.

Q. You mean pictures like that form about half a percent. of the whole number of films that come here?

A. Yes. You saw the audience that night. That picture had no appeal.

Mr. Neogy: Was that the last night?

A. Yes. We had a good house on Saturday.

Chairman: What do you mean by a good house?

A. It was not a packed house. Its capacity is 400. We had 175 that night. That showed it had no drawing power at all. If it had been a Douglas Fairbanks, a Charlie Chaplin, or a Jackie Coogan picture both the shows would have been packed, and even Tuesday would have been a good proposition.

Q. When you say it was packed it was packed almost entirely by Europeans and Anglo-Indians?

A. Yes, with a sprinkling of educated Indians but they are quite in a minority.

Q. So far as the illiterate people are concerned, they have very, very little chance of coming in contact with these films?

A. My prices are prohibitive for them. My lowest price is one rupee. The prices are two rupees and one rupee, and eight annas for children under 14 years. I have no four annas seats. We give a concession for students on off-days, but not for the military because we give them good pictures. We try our best to give them good pictures, and if they can pay three rupees for dances, etc., they can pay two rupees or one rupee for our show here.

Q. Most of the pictures you show are American?

A. Yes.

Q. What percentage do you think the American pictures form in your show?

A. Probably 95 per cent.; if you take the topical budget, which is British, it will be a little less.

Q. They are British topicals?

A. Yes; and some British comic pictures.

Q. But have you come across many British pictures here?

A. Yes. When I was in a film importing business we practically bought 90 per cent. of British pictures.

Q. When was that?

A. About 12 years ago.

Q. And now they don't come in such large numbers?

A. No. We had to stop them because we could not find the capital.

*Q.* Do you mean British pictures are more costly than American pictures?

*A.* I don't think they would be more costly but they were not quite as good as other big American ones; they were not money makers, that is how we look at things.

*Mr. Coatsman:* When did you go into liquidation?

*A.* We have to go back about 3, 4, 5 years.

*Q.* It was after the War that British pictures failed to compete with the big American pictures.

*A.* Yes. I think they are now trying to compete.

*Q.* It was during the War the Americans got the start?

*A.* It is quite possible. They have got so far ahead that it will be very difficult to catch up to them, and they have got the capital. That is what will happen in India. You have not got the capital.

*Chairman:* What I want to know is, was your business entirely confined to British pictures?

*A.* Not entirely, about 90 per cent.

*Q.* What were the other importers doing?

*A.* Madan's were in existence, and the India Films, Limited, were in existence.

*Q.* What pictures did they import?

*A.* Madan's bought some of the big British ones and he bought a whole heap of American.

*Q.* So he imported more American than British?

*A.* Yes, he did at that time.

*Q.* And now do you think Indian films can compete at all even with British films?

*A.* Indian films will never appeal to European audiences in India. You have been to Australia lately. Well I don't know if you went to any cinema house at all there and if you observed the rushes and the crushes and people squeezing to get in. The only way that can happen in India is when Indian pictures are made good enough to show the Indian people, the masses.

*Q.* Do you think such a chance cannot occur for Indian pictures outside India?

*A.* That can never happen in my opinion.

*Q.* And of course you can judge of the European taste.

*A.* Certainly their scenic pictures will go better than anything in the world.

*Q.* But you cannot have all scenic pictures?

*A.* No, they can be just paddings and fill-ups.

*Q.* Well I suppose these pictures which you are now showing, you have been in this line for about 12 years, can you tell us whether the pictures now exhibited show any signs of improvement.

*A.* Certainly.

*Q.* In moral tone, I mean.

*A.* I have really not seen anything very immoral yet.

*Q.* But you know some people take exception, as you have heard for yourself here to-day.

*A.* I think his arguments are silly. He cannot support his argument, he cannot say that he saw a certain picture in which such and such a scene is bad.

*Q.* Well you have experience of the audience in your theatre which is mostly Anglo-Indian and European; have they ever complained to you that these things are objectionable and how it is you show them?

A. Never. I have certainly had a complaint about one picture, where an Indian half-breed comes on. Someone complained to the Superintendent of Police, who thought it ought to be banned and it was banned. It was a picture about an American Indian and something about a white girl.

Q. I see. That was more a political objection, more a racial objection, than immoral.

A. Yes.

Q. Now have you ever heard your European audiences in Calcutta or Allahabad or in Lucknow complain of the sort of films you are showing?

A. They sometimes say it is rubbish and others say it is good, not so far as the morals of the picture are concerned for they only look at the picture from an entertainment point of view.

Q. Have you ever had it complained to you that you are showing pictures that are injurious to the morals of the people?

A. I have never had a complaint like that.

Q. And you say you are under agreement with Madans?

A. Yes.

Q. Is it their theatre or your theatre?

A. It is Mr. Bevan's theatre. I am the Manager. I have signed a contract for 3 years with Madan's.

Q. You show only films which you get through Madan's?

A. Yes. But you will notice that Madan's are buying all the British pictures, all the good ones, all the big ones. He waited his opportunity. He was not going to buy any pictures but what would pay. I notice from his list which he sent me he has bought a picture called "Remembrance". He has bought "Falkland Islands".....

Q. "Mons"?

A. Of course he has got that. He has shown heaps of other things like that.

Q. Where he finds it will be a draw, he buys them?

A. Yes.

Q. Now do you find any difficulty in getting your pictures?

A. Well supposing Madan's opened a theatre in opposition to me, we will have to shut down.

Q. He has entered into a contract with the producers for an exclusive supply to him.

A. They buy under certain conditions there. It is not Madan's fault. We were in the same position. So far as British productions go, we were not bound down to an output because they were not producing to that extent, but they will probably start doing that once they get their capital and their pictures going. You will do it in India too when you really start your business.

Q. All tradesmen do that, not that one tradesman is better than another.

*Colonel Crawford:* When you talk of buying the output, do you mean that they say, when you want 5 or 6 productions, "you must take the balance of our pictures also"?

A. Yes that is the general habit.

*Chairman:* But you are not labouring under this difficulty; Madan's are.

A. Yes but it affects me too because I am on his circuit.

Q. Now, assuming that you are under that difficulty, have you suffered by it?

A. I cannot say I have suffered because when we opened out—Mr. Ducasse is my cousin you see—we struggled on and were doing quite well during the War. Then after the War period Madan's floated a company with a hundred lakhs. That meant the crushing of any person who was in his way. If we had a hundred lakhs we would do the same.

**Q.** What I want to know is, you are now under a contract with Madan's; you get what he gets; and it has not affected the value of the pictures or profits?

**A.** No my profits are very small; we just exist, even though we are with Madan's even though this theatre entirely belongs to us, there is no rent to pay, the furniture and everything else is ours—our own property.

**Q.** I mean if your theatre is going to be run for an audience of half a dozen people, such as we saw the other night, I am wondering how you are going to continue.

**A.** That is very ordinary.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* Probably the people were scared away by the Committee going there that night.

**A.** No, they didn't know. The fact remains that upcountry you often find that kind of thing.

*Chairman:* Is it a very frequent occurrence, that sort of poor audience?

**A.** Yes it is a frequent occurrence on the last night of a picture.

*Colonel Crawford:* Is it because that type of picture is not attractive?

**A.** That sort of picture would not draw in any case.

**Q.** Yet you are forced to show a certain number of them? From your point of view you would rather not have them?

**A.** I wish there was a way out of it.

**Q.** Can you suggest a way?

**A.** It cannot be done unless some one comes forward with hundreds of lakhs.

*Chairman:* Did you think "The Merry Widow" a picture which would not draw?

**A.** I thought it would draw. I have seen the play.

*Mr. Neogy:* If you had the choice, would you have gone in for that particular picture?

**A.** Well I thought it was a money-taker but I was mistaken. I don't know what the reason was. I expected better houses for it because the stage play is known all over the world and my audiences are purely European and Anglo-Indian.

**Q.** Have you seen the original play?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Does the film version follow it more or less faithfully?

**A.** It is a bit more exaggerated; there are exteriors which are not in the play and other things also. The play of course depends a lot on the music and the singing, and the film is all action.

*Chairman:* When you say Madan's are compelled, you are not affected by it. It has not done you any harm that Madan's have to take certain bookings.

**A.** We have no other option.

**Q.** Have you suffered by it?

**A.** I cannot say we have suffered because it meant that otherwise we could not get the bigger pictures and we cannot go on showing medium pictures, because they would not draw.

**Q.** Probably you would put down "The Merry Widow" as a big picture.

**A.** Yes, as a big production. I will tell you the class of pictures that draw—anything big that Charlie Chaplin does, anything big that Douglas Fairbanks does, which means every picture of his. Mary Pickford has a good audience, Jackie Coogan is a universal favourite. Rudolf Valentino also draws. None of the feminine stars except perhaps Mary Pickford draw, however; not one of them. It is the men that do well.

**Q.** I suppose you cannot tell us what is displayed in other theatres.



A. Well I have a fairly good knowledge. I go often to the Elphinstone and know what they are doing.

Q. They show the same class of pictures as you do?

A. Some of them with which I have finished, not all. They show only the big ones after I have finished with them, and they show serials. That has got a certain amount of following.

Q. What is a serial?

A. It is a long drawn out affair. It goes into 30 reels, it is full of action and impossibilities. Most of them are adventure stories. There is nothing in them for an educated man, who would be bored stiff.

Q. You don't show many serials.

A. No, I don't show them at all.

Q. And the serials, are they popular and with what class of people are they popular?

A. Soldiers like them and so do Indians. I don't know what class they come from; probably the illiterate class. They like lots of jumping, people disappearing,—they never die of course,—and they take about 30 reels before they are finished.

Q. They care more for action films?

A. Yes they do.

Q. Do you think that they care for these plays which contain love-scenes?

A. I don't think so. Even if they do see them what effect could it have on them.

Q. But some people tell us they are led astray by such scenes.

A. Well the gentleman who gave evidence this morning spoke of a *pan-biri-wallah* looking at Rudolf Valentino; do you think he would catch hold of the first girl and take her in his arms as he saw it done on the screen by Rudolph Valentino?

Q. You think it is all an exaggerated view they take?

A. Well from the number of pictures of love-scenes that I have seen, I ought to be very immoral indeed.

Q. But you see you are educated and you are able to take care of yourself; but the poor unfortunate illiterate man must always be made the instrument for argument.

A. Yes, which is unfair. It has less effect on him.

Q. He has got less opportunity to do these things; but still any blame can be thrown on him in this country.

A. Here was a gentleman who sat down and called a shopkeeper a low caste man, and he chooses to give evidence.

Q. Then you think there are good possibilities for the film industry in this country?

A. Yes; provided you get the capital. England has waked up now. She has got the capital and she is getting out and we will be showing shortly 40 per cent. English pictures. You will see Madan's getting them out. He does not want to be bound down to the Americans, I am sure, from the fact of his buying all these British pictures now.

Q. And if the Indian industry wants to do anything, it ought to be up and doing now?

A. Yes. To ask Government to give you capital for that is absurd. No country has asked that of its Government. They might have asked for help in other ways.

Q. Yes but conditions may vary in each country. However you cannot dogmatise because one Government does not do it therefore other Governments should not do it.

A. That is up to the Indian Government, if they wish to take the risk, it is no business of mine; but it is a risky undertaking.

*Q.* It is no doubt a risky undertaking but some Governments have to take the risk. Japan did it and has done it successfully.

*A.* Of course they are not allowed to kiss in Japan.

*Q.* That is different; nor will they be allowed to kiss here in India.

*A.* Yes but they bathe there together in the nude. At least I think so.

*Colonel Crawford:* They do.

*Chairman:* But it is not done in the films and we all have different notions. Each country has its own notions—that is all. So if India is to compete with other countries, say Britain.....

*A.* But why compete with Britain? It is not a question of competing.

*Q.* Why should it not be competing?

*A.* But what do you mean by competing?

*Q.* In their own film production?

*A.* I don't think England is trying to compete with anyone; she is trying to develop an industry of her own.

*Q.* So also it is for India to have an industry of her own.

*A.* That is not competition. You wait and see. America is not competing at all. The fact is she has established herself in the industry. England is going to start in and there will be two industries. You will get good pictures from each side.

*Q.* If India is to start her industry, what do you think should be done.

*A.* How can it be competition? You cannot send your films anywhere else in the world.

*Q.* There are only 350 theatres in India. If English and American goods come pouring in here, cheaper made goods, how can you expect the Indian industry to grow?

*A.* It is not a matter of competition. India is very badly placed in that respect.

*Q.* All the more reason why an effort should be made.

*A.* Indian pictures would go very well with Indians but there will be no competition because Europeans do not go to see Indian films.

*Q.* But Indians go to see European films?

*A.* They will still go; you can never stop them.

*Q.* Not if you have Indian pictures?

*A.* Yes, they will still go I think.

*Q.* Then you do not think any Government action is necessary.

*A.* Oh yes, certainly help them, but not with finance; give them other help.

*Q.* Why not cheap loans?

*A.* Then how are you going to secure yourself?

*Q.* Supposing they secure themselves, what is your objection?

*A.* I have no objection whatever. I have nothing to do with it. I am just a business man.

*Q.* But I mean if an industry is to be established in a country which is weak compared to other countries, as you yourself admit—you say here the other countries are much ahead in film production and are still going ahead with new inventions and new ideas—India is not in that happy position.

*A.* You will soon be having pictures here which will be talking pictures.

*Q.* Exactly. I suppose it is time that India wakes up to a sense of her responsibility?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Films which are shown by you to Europeans here, are they fit to be shown universally in the country?

*A.* You mean to anybody?

**Q. Yes.**

**A.** Yes, I think so. The illiterate will be very little impressed with anything like that. That is my opinion. I do not see what will happen. Murders are not depicted on the screen, that is to say, you have got to imagine them, they are not actually shown.

**Q.** You think the censorship adequate?

**A.** I think it is adequate and if it stopped as it is now with one board at Bombay; I have mentioned a Central Board.....

**Q.** You advocate a Central Board at Bombay.

**A.** But still giving the District Magistrate here certain powers. It is not a bad idea. I mean if he saw a picture that was bad here and spoke to me about it in a decent way I would discontinue showing it. The District Magistrate is always someone to be considered. He is placed there by Government.

**Q.** Now if you want a Central Board in one place, do you think the trade will suffer by that, if all films have to be passed by one board, say at Bombay or Calcutta,—you for instance here or other people.

**A.** Of course that is very difficult and I thought that too, because there are some film importers in Bombay and some in Calcutta.

**Q.** Some in Madras and Rangoon.

**A.** Yes there are some there too. I overlooked that. For the distribution of films time would be a great thing. Of course the more a picture is held up the more it is losing money.

**Q.** I suppose you have a considerable experience of the people of this country.

**A.** I was born and bred in this country.

**Q.** You know both the literate and the illiterate classes?

**A.** Oh yes.

**Q.** What about posters and handbills?

**A.** Well, Mr. Rangachariar, you see magazines and other things. You go to any bookstall, you take up a paper and you see an art picture of a kind, and if you see a picture of "The Merry Widow" kissing, what does it convey to you? Nothing very different I am sure.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* Everybody does not see magazines, while these circulars and posters are seen by thousands.

**A.** Well I print about 1,500 for each show and the population of Lucknow is about 3 or 4 lakhs.

*Colonel Crawford:* Now why did you select from "The Merry Widow" just that particular scene to put on your handbill; is it because it was a draw; it must be to draw?

**A.** Yes it does draw.

**Q.** We don't want to be prudish about it.

**A.** No we don't want to be prudish; it does draw. We have got to pick out something which interests people. Whether it does or not we don't know.

*Mr. Neogy:* It tickles the fancy of the European? Because you said you cater mainly for the European.

**A.** In my own case it purely goes to the Europeans.

*Chairman:* I suppose it draws the Indian just as much as the European?

*Mr. Neogy:* But you have the European in mind, because you don't have Indians in your theatre.

**A.** My Indian audience is very very small. Still I send it to educated Indians.

*Chairman:* Now as regards a Central Board, do you think there will be any practical difficulty to the trade if we have one Central Board.

A. I think I will have to rectify that. Madan's would probably be all right because most of their pictures come to Calcutta but it would be difficult for Pathe's in Bombay.

Q. More films come through Bombay than through Calcutta—nearly two-thirds.

*Colonel Crawford:* Do you think then there should be boards at each port of entry.

A. Yes, I mention Bombay and Calcutta the same as they have at present.

*Chairman:* In Madras they have one too.

A. Well then that will be all right, that is a port.

Q. You think that would be more convenient to the trade?

A. Yes. In England sometimes the producer has to sell a picture before it is released so it comes direct without going to the British Board.

Q. Do you want a provincial board's certificate to circulate throughout the country; if one board passes it, that certificate should be enough?

A. I am talking as an exhibitor and I mean it satisfies me to have that, otherwise we will be upset.

Q. Supposing each province insisted on its own censorship, would it hamper the trade?

A. It would hamper the trade tremendously we would have to hold up films.

Q. So that when you say you are speaking for the trade, it is not because it is advantageous to you but because it would hamper you. We do not want to discount your opinion that because you advocate it it is advantageous, because it would hamper the trade.

A. It would hamper it very much.

Q. Would you have each film, have you any objection to having each film examined by two members of the board—two or more?

A. There is no objection; why should it not be 3 members,—say a Hindu, a Muhammadan and a Christian or a European?

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* You always take pictures from Madan's.

A. Yes I do.

Q. What will happen if, suppose, Madan's sold their concern to some American combine?

A. We would probably be absorbed. They would buy up our place if the Americans ever thought of doing that.

Q. Have you heard anything of that sort?

A. I did hear remarks about it. I don't know whether it has materialised or not. I read of it in the papers.

Q. What do you say to this that you will then take from the Americans?

A. We will try and sell out and get out of it.

Q. Do you always rent films from Madan's or do you buy on the takings of the house.

A. I work on a percentage.

Q. 75 per cent.?

A. 60 per cent. to me and 40 to them. We work on a percentage basis.

Q. At other places I was told they take 75; at times probably they do that for a good film?

A. Well, I once paid 50 per cent. for a good film, only once, and that is when the American representative came along with it. That picture was called "Beau Geste". That is the only time I have paid so much but I am still fighting it out. I have not paid the difference of the percentage yet.

Q. It was not a good house that day when the Committee came there; but at times you charge 50 per cent. more on the tickets do you not?

A. Not 50 per cent.

Q. So what you lose in the other way you make good by this.

A. That is the only way to do it. It is not 50 per cent. though.

*Chairman:* How much then?

A. 33 per cent.

Q. When you have an extra good picture you put that on.

A. That has happened only once.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* Do you know anything about block and blind booking?

A. Well that is what we are doing. This is blind booking.

Q. Don't you think it encourages a second rate production? Instead of having a first class production you have a second rate one?

A. Yes, but you cannot rectify it. Madan's are helpless. The film importer is helpless.

Q. Do you think it should be stopped by legislation?

A. Yes, it would help an exhibitor if legislation could secure that.

Q. To secure equitable conditions of trading it should be stopped by legislation?

A. Yes.

*Chairman:* Is there any blind booking in this country? Are you not 18 months behind hand really in exhibiting a picture ordinarily.

A. Most times we are, but sometimes we are on a par.

Q. But most times you are 18 months behind America or England.

A. That is quite right. Shall I explain why. That is, in New York or in London they have got about 10 theatres and there is a picture like the "Beau Geste" showing in 8 of them. That shows that they bought for London itself so many copies, and they have sent to Madans perhaps two positive copies. In India the film business is so dull that we are not making a fortune. Mr. Madan will prove that to you. Perhaps he buys two copies at the most and they take a long time to go round the circuit.

Q. But are you not doing blind booking in the sense in which America or England does it?

A. I am not a film importer, and so I can't tell you about it.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* You have no opportunity of previewing?

A. I get my pictures three or four days beforehand.

Q. Have you any opportunity to preview the films before ordering out?

A. No, we cannot go from Lucknow to Calcutta to see a picture.

Q. Are there no agencies here?

A. No, we have none here. Generally we go by the "Statesman" reports in Calcutta which give you a fairly good idea of what the picture is like.

*Mr. Neogy:* You don't take every picture that Madans bring out but you make your own selections?

A. I write to Madans personally saying that I want a particular picture for December, and sometimes I get what I want. In fact, I get about 35 per cent. of what I specially ask for.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* What is the percentage of British films that you show here in a month?

A. We have not been showing many, but I think we have shown on an average about 5 per cent. in a month.

Q. Are there any agencies for British films in India?

A. I think the Globe Theatres in Calcutta buy a lot. Pathes also buy a lot.

Q. If British films are to come to India, you would probably like to have more agencies in India?

A. If the pictures are good, I think they will come. If there are more agencies and if good pictures are readily available, as an exhibitor I would

always welcome it, because I can get pictures easily on account of the competition.

Q. The British pictures are not of a good standard, I suppose?

A. Some of them are very good, their Comedies and the Dramas are really excellent. But the drawback is that we do not get many of them.

Q. Suppose you show British films, will it affect your takings?

A. Alongside a Douglas Fairbanks film there will be a difference, but you can certainly draw as much as a fairly good American picture or even better.

Q. From your experience could you tell me if the British films have some kind of bad flavour about them—I mean do they contain kissing scenes, love making scenes and things of that kind?

A. So far we have only shown Comedy-dramas and one or two historical things, and they have not much of the sloppy business about them.

*Chairman:* The sloppy stuff won't fit in with the kind of stuff they show. But supposing they show a social drama picture then won't that sloppy stuff come in?

A. Then it will.

Q. Would they avoid the passionate love scenes, deep kissing and things of that sort?

A. I have not seen many, and so I could not give you an answer to that, because they have not been producing that sort of stuff. "The Rat" will give you an idea. I have not seen it myself so far. But the British pictures I have seen have been certainly quite good.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* Won't you advocate that British companies start their studios here in order to assist the film industry? They could produce Indian films or any other kind of films?

A. Yes, it will be a good thing if British companies come and start their studios here, because when you had to get English education first you had to get professors from Home. I believe there is already a British Company somewhere in Lahore which is taking pictures.

Q. There was a Social Hygiene Delegation with Dr. Lees and others which visited this country, and they say this—"In every province visited by the delegation the evil influence of the cinema was cited by educationists and representative citizens as one of the major factors in lowering the standard of sex conduct, thereby tending to increased dissemination of disease". Do you agree with this?

A. I could not give you any opinion on that. Who was Dr. Lees? Was he a member of the delegation from England? I think they are wrong in their conclusions. Disease has been in existence long before the cinema came to this country.

Q. Have you come across any films which have been rejected in England and shown here?

A. I am not in a position to tell you that, because I am not a film importer. Even if it happened, how could I know it?

Q. May I know where your licensing fees go to?

A. We pay two licensing fees, one goes to the District Magistrate's court and the other goes to the municipality.

Q. Don't you think it will be a good thing if the licensing fees were to go to the Central Board which you advocate?

A. Oh, yes, certainly.

*Colonel Crawford:* You were an importer under the name of Ducasse Films in Calcutta. Can you tell me if there is a very large market for films in India?

A. It is a very cheap market, and an importer has to buy cheap films. The reason is this. When we were importing pictures in Calcutta and sending them round, we used to demand Rs. 200 for a picture for a four

days run. Our customers used to haggle over the thing and come down to Rs. 150, and when we actually sent them our pictures, they would not pay us and it took us months and months to get our money back. The upkeep of our office did not warrant our continuing the business, there was no profit in it, and it was the receipt that we got in Calcutta from our theatre that kept the whole thing going. That is why we could not get on.

Q. Could you get enough from places like Bombay and Calcutta to make it a paying proposition?

A. If it was a good picture.

Q. Can you give us an idea without giving away any of your trade secrets, how much an importer gets for a good picture, if he takes a picture like "Beau Geste"?

A. So far as that picture is concerned, the producer sends it out on a percentage basis. He simply gives a commission to the importer. I believe a similar practice exists in some of the Motor Car firms which keep 20 per cent. of the sales and send the balance to America. I think the same practice obtains in regard to big pictures which of course we could not buy. But what we bought in Calcutta we bought outright.

Q. When you bought a profit earning picture on an outright basis for India, Burma and Ceylon, how much had you to pay?

A. We paid sometimes Rs. 5,000 or Rs. 6,000 and sometimes between Rs. 3,000 and 4,000. The prices varied.

Q. Could you not make a profit on a picture costing say Rs. 4,000?

A. Unless we did well in Calcutta and Rangoon where there was a certain amount of profit.

Q. As an exhibitor you do not have blind booking, i.e., you do not take the output of the producer before he has actually produced it?

A. I can't, but that is what Madan is doing. Because there are lots of people who are out in the market wanting to buy any pictures like that.

Q. From the exhibitor's point of view, block booking is not in your interest? Is there any method of getting over it?

A. There is no method of getting over it.

Q. If other countries open up agencies here then it will be possible for you to get pictures?

A. That is the only method.

Chairman: If you want a particular picture, I suppose you will have to pay more for it, and Madans will refuse to give it to you?

A. I am on their circuit. Why should I pay more.

Q. I don't mean that you can't get it, but probably you will have to pay more?

A. That is not the point. They cannot supply such good pictures one after another, because they themselves have got any number of theatres all over the country.

Colonel Crawford: You are very much in the hands of the producer, and I suppose you cannot get away from it?

A. We are in the hands of the film suppliers, and we are not dissatisfied with the service.

(At this stage the witness expressed a desire to postpone his examination till the next day as he had to attend on a sick patient, and as the Committee could not take him on the following day, the witness withdrew.)

**Written Statement of Srimati MAYADEVI, dated the 8th December 1927.**

GENERAL.

2. (a) (1) 75 per cent. educated (2) 25 per cent. uneducated—a good deal—Calcutta.

(b) In the European quarter 50 per cent. Europeans, 25 per cent. educated and 25 per cent. uneducated Indians—In the Indian localities it is generally composed of middle and servant classes.

(c) Couldn't give you a percentage. But noticed non-Indian children under fourteen to frequent cinemas much more than Indians. Adolescent youths flock the cinema—the student class.

## PART I.

### *Film Industry in India.*

3. Adventuresome and Erotic, both to the Indian and general.

4. For the Westernised Indians but not for the ordinary—because the films produced bear no environmental interest to the ordinary Indian public.

5. I don't think there are sufficient numbers of Indian produced films to go the round.

(a) I shouldn't think so.

(b) At suburban areas.

(c) I daresay it would be profitable were more shows given in the interior of large cities.—I am afraid I can cite no successful Indian film for it strikes me that the best of them up till now—*The Light of Asia*—under a German firm leaves much for improvement, although the subject and the artists might have drawn a large Indian crowd.

6. (a) For the almost extinct older generation—but the general I think would relish the flavour of more sauce than themes of Literature, History and Mythology.

(b) (1 and 2) Both the educated and uneducated hanker for spice. No one attends a cinema with an educational and devotional motive. One goes for its stimulating effect on the less austere interests in fact as a relief from them.

7. The difficulty is not in regard to British but Indian troops, the British Tommy can fall in line with the spirit of the ordinary western films but they fail to be appreciated by the Indian as I have said before for want of environmental interest. I think historical romances national and of other lands would appeal to the Indian troops.

8. (a) I have no knowledge of the efficiency of the industry.

(b) But I think the main difficulty besetting the industry in India is primarily the association of thought in regard to stage life which stands in the way of the average respectable Indian men and women from taking up the art. Secondly, the involving (especially in the case of women) a life outside their homes and thirdly, the lack of financial enterprise of company promoters. I believe if the first two could be remedied and reconciled the third factor would be achievable.

14. I daresay the growth of the film industry is dependent to an extent on the demand created for it. I do think that its use should be extensively increased throughout the villages in co-ordination with the departments both governmental and other social service agencies. Demand is the hand-maid of supply.

15. Not until the social outlook changes.

I have already imputed social and moral conservatism to be the reason.

16. No—But all that could be sought out and trained if the opposition against the profession itself could be overcome and I believe at least for India the production would then be of competitive value. Social and moral broadmindedness and strength of mind on the part of those who would otherwise be willing to join the industry.

17. If the ground is prepared enough to attract capitalistic interest.

18. For educational films Government may be an effective incentive and encouragement—subscribing to the cost of production and display.



20. (a) Justifiable in so much as it would aid in the educational development of the country.

20. (b) Increment of educational grant ear-marked a subsidy for the purpose.

21. State agency and monopoly of the film industry would kill but a Central Board of Censors comprising of men and women from each Province would do much to improve the morale of the industry.

### *Films of the British Commonwealth.*

22. I don't think India needs to participate in the policy of the encouragement suggested for British films.

(b) She can make herself known and understood just as well throughout the Empire and the world if she could produce appropriate national and social films.

She need not burden herself further by helping the rest of the Commonwealth to be known and understood. If the policy involves financial responsibility.

23. To a great extent provided the characterization is true.

## **PART II.**

### *Social aspect and control.*

24. (a) The Society-picture films of the Bohemianism of high life are undoubtedly demoralising they may not actually injure the adult public mind but they cannot be said to be conducive to edifying instincts.

(b) There is certainly a circulation of ethically degraded films. The criminally suggestive films I think have little effect as the western mode and method of criminality bear little similarity with that of this country.

(c) No class of film is positively harmful it is so in as much as erotic films are susceptible to excite the lower passion of human nature especially of adolescents.

(d) I sex films.

(e) The Police know best.

(f) I could cite specific instances of the effect of erotic films on adolescents minds but I refrain from doing so it being a delicate topic the disclosure of which may embarrass the persons concerned but I can say I have known instances which have driven the sexual mind to desperation of youngsters to natural and unnatural gratification of passion.

25. If you want the western life to be held in respect its social customs should be modified for presentation in this country—but of course that would be a fictitious caricature!

26. (a) Considering the recent aggravation of religious susceptibilities it would be a cautious measure.

(b) None to my knowledge.

27. Expression has been given to these questions in the preceding paragraph.

(b) I have no information.

28. Partially answered already.

29. Yes!

30. Yes! for reasons already mentioned. I would classify films for children up to twelve, adolescents up to eighteen and adults.

31. (a) Certainly.

32. I don't know anything about its working.

33. (a) To the section of hyper excitable natures censorship would not be welcome.

(b) I daresay.

(c) It would not interfere with the freedom required for artistic and inspirational development for the social films which comprise the bulk and need censoring are inartistic so far as they are vulgar displays of carnal instincts.

34. Yes.

(1) Since provincial boards are redundant so long as you can get men and women of each province of the representative type who have mixed and known the varying tastes and minds of the people to sit at the Central Board. It would be an economical policy.

(2) I couldn't say how the trade would be effected.

(c) There is no need to overlap the efforts of a Provincial and Central Board films could be censored by the Central Board on which there will be the Provincial representatives, if it should be necessary to revise the opinion of the respective Provinces the representatives could by frequenting the Province and convening public meetings refresh themselves with current views and opinions.

(d) Perhaps by taxing the cinema companies.

35. (a) I can't say.

(b) No. Suitable members on the central board would serve the purpose equally.

36. (a) Couldn't say.

(b) Yes—yes—

37. Couldn't inform you—but I recollect one film that was passed but eventually prohibited—I think it was "The Daughter of the Gods", featuring Annette Kellerman.

40. It stands to reason that they should as the exaggerated thrilling descriptions in the advertisements are in themselves an unhealthy incentive.

44. Public bodies and the press could exercise much salutary influence in developing (not maintaining the present standard!) a high standard—by honest and clean criticism and exhorting the better instincts of the audience.

**\*Oral Evidence of The DOWAGER RANI of Mandi, Mrs. HABIB, Mrs. MITTER, and Srimati MAYADEVI, on Thursday, the 8th December 1927.**

*Chairman:* Who is going to speak on behalf of the ladies, or would you prefer to give your opinions separately? We will do it in this way. One of you will answer and if the others have any disagreement they will say so. I suppose you are not able to speak on account of your throat, Mrs. Mayadevi? May I trouble you Rani Sahiba?

Of course we are more interested to have your views on the question of the effect of the cinema on the people of the country. Have you seen this memorandum prepared by Srimati Mayadevi? Do you agree with it?

*The Rani of Mandi:* Yes.

*Q.* It represents your views also?

*Mrs. Habib:* I have not seen it.

*Q.* And of course Mrs. Mitter has not seen it?

*Mrs. Mitter:* No, I have not.

*Q.* Now, there are two or three points on which I would like to elicit information. Do you think Indian films are popular with our people?

*The Rani of Mandi:* Yes, among the uneducated it is very popular.

*Q.* Both among the ladies and the men, Indian films are more popular than western films?

A. Some people like western films, I cannot say. I can say that people who are not educated like Indian films because they do not understand western films.

Q. Now you have seen many films, Rani Sahiba?

A. Indian films—very few—one or two.

Q. Both here and in England?

A. I have never been to England.

Q. I thought you had. Do you often go to the cinema, Rani Sahiba?

A. Yes, I do.

Q. Where? In Lucknow?

A. And in the hill stations.

Q. Can you tell us whether you generally approve of the films shown here?

A. Some I like, some I don't.

Q. What sort of things don't you like?

A. I don't remember the names of the films.

Q. I don't mean names. I mean something must have made an impression on you which you don't like?

A. Some scenes are obscene in the cinema. I don't like them.

Q. You don't like the passionate loves making scenes?

A. Not too much.

Q. You don't mind love scenes but they should not be too much exhibited. Is that your idea?

A. Yes.

Q. But I mean would you avoid all—you don't mind my putting the question—would you avoid all kissing scenes, for instance?

A. No. You cannot avoid everything like that.

Q. But it should not go too far?

A. Yes.

Q. I notice you have mentioned here that you would like the films to be classified for children, for young people and for adults. You want three classifications—that is rather impracticable, isn't it?

A. Oh yes.

Q. First of all the age may not be known to the Manager. Don't you think it would be enough if certain films are certified as fit to be shown to children. Instead of saying children should not go to this and that, simply as a guide to parents and guardians if the censor added a note "fit to be shown to children", will that not be enough?

A. I think so.

Q. Moreover, if the students or children go notwithstanding such a warning, I suppose the parents must take the risk themselves. Don't you think so?

A. I cannot say. Sometimes they like to go.

Q. Such children we cannot be providing for. Do you think that that will be enough—"fit for showing to children or students."

A. Yes.

Q. Some of them you say are objectionable. You mean objectionable only to children or even to adults?

A. Some people who are not educated don't like to see such a thing, so if they see such a thing they will come and make fun of the kind of the thing they have seen in the cinema.

Q. But does it do any harm to them—merely making fun?

A. I cannot say if it does harm.

Q. I mean has it any demoralising effect on them?

A. They make fun, that is all, I don't know what is in their minds.

Q. Do you see many such people in the cinemas to which you go?

A. Sometimes I do, but not always.

Q. Do they form a large portion of the audience or only a small portion of the audience?

A. Sometimes it is a large portion, sometimes it is not.

Q. I mean the class of people who are likely to make fun?

A. Even sometimes very big people, they are not educated, they make fun. They will say, "what kind of cinema!" You go and see. But they object to your going.

Q. But you don't think that is a reasonable objection?

A. No, I don't think so.

Q. I mean such objections there will be in a country where there are different stages of society?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you think that the censorship is adequate as it is?

A. I cannot follow.

Q. You see, now all the films are passed through a board of censors and an inspector sees them. If he feels any doubt about any particular one he refers to a board. It is only after that films are shown to the public. I mean, from the films which you saw do you think there is sufficient check now?

A. For two or three months I have not seen any.

Q. From your general experience do you think that the check now imposed is adequate?

A. Since a year ago there is. What I have seen there has not been objectionable.

Q. For the last year you have not seen any objectionable film? From your point of view how many objectionable films do you think you have seen in all your experience?

A. I don't remember. I have seen several. I never objected to anything. But I have heard remarks from other people who were sitting round.

Q. You didn't find any objection? It didn't shock you?

A. No, why should it? I didn't mind.

Q. That is a very important point. Some people may object but a lady like yourself, it did not shock you at all. There is no film which you saw which shocked you.

A. No, it didn't shock me.

Q. As it is put here: "Society picture films of the Bohemian high life are actually demoralising. They do not actually injure the public mind but cannot be said to conduce to edifying instincts." What do you mean by that—it is not educative?

*Mrs. Mayadevi:* It does not prompt any good instincts.

Q. But it is not injurious?

A. No.

Q. Either to adults or to young people?

A. To young people, of course, it may be.

*Mr. Neogy:* And the remedy is classification?

*Chairman:* But classification only for children under 12, is it not? Or do you want to classify students too? Fit for adolescents, up to the age of 18—both for boys and girls?

A. Yes.

Q. In your experience do you think there have been any cases in which people have been led astray by seeing the cinema?

*The Rani of Mandi:* I cannot say.

Q. You cannot recall to mind any instance?

A. No, I cannot.

Q. None of you can give us any instance where people have been led astray by seeing the cinema?

Mrs. Mitter: Excuse me, are you taking the views of all of us? I did not understand that from the beginning. I differ from the Rani Sahiba's views very much on several points.

Q. Very well, I will question you separately later. Do you think from your experience that Indian ladies will come forward to act for the cinema—ladies of good families?

The Rani of Mandi: I don't think so. I cannot say. Here in Lucknow nobody will come and do it.

Q. But probably in Bengal?

A. In Bengal they have come. Some respectable ladies did act for "The Light of Asia." Mrs. Rajan and some Parsi ladies.

Q. In Bengal there are several ladies who go on the stage nowadays, aren't there?

A. Oh yes.

Q. But you think the United Provinces is hopeless?

A. Oh yes. When they don't come out in public even, how can they go and act?

Q. But do you think public opinion will welcome such ladies coming forward to act for the films?

A. In the United Provinces of course it is very difficult.

Q. What are the Indian films you have seen?

A. I have seen "Shri Krishna." I do not like it. The acting is not very good. The photography was not bad, but the acting was not good at all. I have seen "Savitri," but that was produced in Italy. I liked it, although it was acted by Italians.

Q. You think they acted the Indian part very well?

A. They did it, although I cannot say they could do it like an Indian. Anyway it was much better than those in which Indians have acted, I must say.

Q. Did you see "The Light of Asia"?

A. No.

Q. Nor have you seen the "Sacrifice"?

A. No.

Colonel Crawford: I understand that certain scenes are now shown on the film which you think had better not been shown?

A. Yes.

Q. That is, although the censorship rules lay down that those things should be cut out, still a certain number do slip through which you think are generally objectionable.

A. Yes.

Q. As regards children, do you take your children to the cinema at all?

A. I have not got any children to take.

Q. Are they likely to be unduly excited by scenes of horror?

A. Children always remember things, whereas we do not remember them.

Q. You think on the whole you would prefer to stop children from going to the cinema altogether under a certain age?

A. I cannot say that, because sometimes if there is some nice film shown why should they not see it?

Q. You do not want to bar them altogether like they do in some of the countries?

A. No.

**\*Oral Evidence of Mrs. MITTER, on Thursday, the 8th December 1927.**

*Chairman:* You frequently go to the cinema?

A. Yes.

*Q.* Here in Lucknow?

A. Yes.

*Q.* How often do you go?

A. I go sometimes 2 or 3 times a week.

*Q.* So you are very well acquainted with the cinema. Is it mostly in Lucknow or have you seen it elsewhere?

A. I have been to the cinema in Calcutta sometimes and 2 or 3 times in Allahabad.

*Q.* Your experience is mostly confined to Lucknow?

A. Yes.

*Q.* What cinema do you go to generally? The Prince of Wales?

A. I generally go to the Elphinstone, but sometimes I have been to the other one also.

*Q.* Why did you not go often to the Prince of Wales?

A. Because it is far away from my place, and the Elphinstone is very close to my house.

*Q.* I suppose in this, Indian pictures and western pictures are shown?

A. Mostly western pictures in the Elphinstone.

*Q.* Now and then they show Indian pictures too?

A. Sometimes, but I have not seen any Indian picture here. I have seen some in Calcutta and I have got a very bad impression of them.

*Q.* Produced in Bengal or produced elsewhere?

A. In Bengal.

*Mr. Neogy:* When was that?

A. That was some 5 years ago.

*Chairman:* You have not seen any Bombay pictures?

A. No.

*Q.* I suppose you have not seen "The Light of Asia"?

A. No.

*Q.* I suppose you have seen mostly, almost entirely, western pictures?

A. Yes.

*Q.* What is the general impression left on your mind? Are they useful?

A. Not useful.

*Q.* Are they amusing?

A. Yes.

*Q.* You want amusement?

A. That is why I go.

*Q.* In that way the cinema is useful, is it not?

A. Yes, just to spend a little time.

*Q.* Just as exercise and recreation, amusement is also a necessity?

A. It is not quite necessary. I can as well sit at home and read a book.

*Q.* I do not think you would be so merry and happy as you are if you did that?

A. I just go for a little bit of outing.

Q. You care for it, is it not?

A. Not that I specially care to see the pictures.

Q. But as a sort of outing?

A. Yes.

Q. Similarly even among the poor, they want an outing of that sort?

A. Yes.

Q. For the poor people is it not the only outing they have?

A. I have my own servant coming and asking my permission to go to the cinema.

Q. Therefore it is a necessity in that way, as an amusement to the poor people?

A. Yes.

Q. To make life comfortable. Of course, you can drag on your existence, but if you want to lead a comfortable life an amusement of this sort is necessary?

A. Yes.

Q. What do you think of the pictures which are shown? Do you like them? The fact that you go so often shows that you like them?

A. No. I do not like some of those pictures. I would not like my daughter to go and see them. I would not go to those even with my own brother, or father or anybody else. It is all right for me when I see them with my husband, but I would not go there with my brother.

Q. Does it occur very often like that or only very rarely?

A. Almost every one has some scenes like that.

Q. So you have objection to almost every picture?

A. I object to the western picture altogether.

Q. And still you are one of its greatest patrons? You object to almost every western picture because it contains love scenes?

A. Yes. In India we do not do that sort of thing so publicly and so shamelessly even in your homes. It is all right for the western people. If those pictures are meant only for the western people it is all right.

Q. Why should we not know how they live, why should not the people of this country know how the people of other countries live. Don't you want your women to get civilised, or people to get civilised and to know how the world is?

A. I would rather not have my countrymen and countrywomen see such scenes.

Q. English theatres come here?

A. Yes.

Q. Have you seen them?

A. I do not go to those theatres for that reason.

Q. You do not want to see those opera girls dancing?

A. No.

Q. But they do come and you cannot prevent it?

A. Yes.

Q. Why should not people here have the benefit of understanding how other people live?

A. Certainly, but it does not mean that certain things which are an amusement to the western people should be an amusement to us.

Q. But the people whom you see in the cinema enjoy the show?

A. I do not know. Sometimes I have seen people clapping at those scenes which they would not ever like to have enacted in their own homes.

Q. You take a very severe view of life.

A. I do not know that, but I would not have those things repeated here.

**Q.** Do you think the cinema will be attractive without such scenes, or even the stage? You read novels?

**A.** Without making it so.....

**Q.** If it is the habit of the people who take a particular part to act in that way, do you think the stage should not allow it to be shown?

**A.** For that reason I am very much in favour of censoring certain films for India specially, and having Indian films specially for India.

**Q.** You say only Indian films should be shown to Indians?

**A.** No, but western films also after being properly censored.

**Q.** Then you would want western people to behave in India in an Indian way?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** You would not want them to have short skirts?

**A.** No.

**Q.** Or bathing costumes?

**A.** No.

**Q.** Nor be illustrated, nor have beauty competition?

**A.** I have not seen any beauty competition.

**Q.** In actual life I mean. You see the "Times of India Illustrated Weekly"?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Do you see there beauty competitions in legs and ankles?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Do you object to that?

**A.** Yes. I do not like it.

**Q.** You do not like such things to be shown at all?

**A.** I do not see any necessity for showing such things to our Indians.

**Q.** Have you ever lived in a sea-bathing place?

**A.** No. I have not seen a bathing scene.

**Q.** Have you been to Bombay?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** You have not been to Juhu?

**A.** No.

**Q.** You have not seen bathing scenes there?

**A.** No.

**Q.** So, you take a very extreme view. Have you seen in the Illustrated Times of India pictures showing ladies in good position being photographed in their bathing costumes?

**A.** I have seen that. That is all right from the western point of view.

**Q.** It is published in India and Indians see it.

**A.** Seeing such a picture does not leave such strong impression. You know it is only a picture. But when you see these people really acting.....

**Q.** What you see in the film is also a picture?

**A.** For the time being you forget; in the case of films, they are live pictures.

**Q.** These are also live people whose photographs are published?

**A.** There is a difference.

**Q.** Anyway you want such scenes to be omitted altogether?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** No kissing, no embracing—you want all that to be omitted from every picture?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Do you think that view of yours is shared by many people?



A. I do not know. But very few of those Indian ladies whom I know go to the cinemas.

Q. You look at it from the point of view of the effect on the women, or on the men, or boys or girls? What is it you are afraid of by seeing that?

A. It would demoralise young boys, young girls and young men also.

Q. Do you say young men and young girls under 18?

A. It may be over 18.

Q. Then what is the limit you would have?

A. I do not know about the age. Some people might be impressionable.....

Q. Some people are impressionable even in their sixtieth year of age! (Laughter).

Mr. Neogy: Could you not fix the average?

A. I could not, but I know that some young men are very easily impressed and some are not.

Chairman: It depends upon individual temperament. But you would be legislating for exceptional temperaments?

A. That I would rather leave to the legislators themselves.

Q. Your proposition involves difficulty in finding out a rule. You think it is all right for good people and for bad people it is bad. That is what it comes to, for those who have got a bad tendency it becomes bad.

A. No. Even for good people, I would not like them to see that sort of thing.

Q. You are not satisfied with merely issuing a certificate "fit to be shown to the children," but you want something more should be done?

A. Yes.

Q. You want to cut off all those scenes?

A. Yes.

Q. The censorship should exclude such scenes?

A. Yes.

Q. If ladies are presented and men are presented on the screen they should be fully dressed, that is your idea?

A. Not only dress but in everything.

Q. For instance, we see on the screen certain classes of dress which are mere appologies for dress.

A. Yes, in most of these dances, sometimes in bed-room scenes and such like things. They are very objectionable.

Q. I suppose you cannot give us any instance where any boy or girl was led astray by seeing the cinema?

A. No.

Q. I do not want the name or names, but you cannot recall any instance where a boy or girl was led astray by seeing the cinema?

A. No.

Mr. Neogy: I quite appreciate your position, but supposing we had some special shows for ladies only and only married women were allowed to see certain pictures, no male person being allowed to go in on those occasions, do you think even then you would object to those pictures?

A. Yes. I do not see why ladies should not behave properly among their own sex.

Q. It is not a question of delicacy in the presence of other people, male relations?

A. No.

Q. Your objection is far more deep rooted?

A. Much more. I want ladies to behave themselves properly in front of ladies.

*Q.* Would you mind Bankim Chandra Chatterji's novels being screened?

*A.* I have read them.

*Chairman:* There is no kissing scene there?

*Mr. Neogy:* Yes, there is. "Krishna Kanta's Will" has been recently screened. And there are certain scenes there to which you would perhaps take exception even though it was based on Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's work?

*A.* I do not know.

*Q.* They are read by everybody.

*A.* Yes. I do not so much mind reading the thing as seeing it on the screen.

**\*Oral Evidence of Mrs. HABIB, on Thursday, the 8th December 1927.**

*To Chairman:* There is just one thing I want to say. I have seen some very nice Indian films in Baroda.

*Q.* Where were they produced?

*A.* Bombay.

*Q.* You think they are very popular?

*A.* They are not very popular. They are popular with the poorer class of people.

*Q.* But they are not popular with the educated people? Those that go to the western cinemas do not like them?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Do you think some effort ought to be made to improve them?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* You think the Indian film industry should be encouraged?

*A.* Yes. The films have improved a great deal in the last 4 or 5 years.

*Q.* You think further improvement is needed?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* And you think Indian films should be produced in larger numbers and of better quality?

*A.* Yes.



## CALCUTTA.

### Oral Evidence of Mr. E. F. OATEN, Director of Public Instruction in Bengal, on Monday, the 12th December 1927.

*Chairman:* Mr. Oaten, you are the Director of Public Instruction in Bengal?

A. Yes.

Q. For how long have you held that office?

A. Since February 1924. I have been in the Education Department since 1909.

Q. I suppose you know the various parts of the province?

A. Yes, I have visited most parts of the province.

Q. Is the film industry getting more popular now?

A. I have only seen audiences waiting outside cinemas in Calcutta and Darjeeling. There are sometimes good crowds there.

Q. Are there many cinemas outside Calcutta?

A. I am afraid I cannot tell you.

Q. Have you made any attempt to use the film in Bengal for educational purposes?

A. We started an investigation to see if we could use it. I also inquired from the Directors of Public Instruction in other provinces as to whether they were doing anything in this matter and if so what they were doing. I received replies from most of them saying that they were doing nothing in the matter. The Principal of the Teachers' Training College at Dacca sent me a short letter which I will read *in extenso*. He said this. "I have the honour to refer you to the Report of the Imperial Educational Conference published in the Educational Supplement to the 'Times' of July 1927. The general opinion of the conference was that the educational possibilities of the cinema have been much exaggerated, that they are severely limited, that the cinema may be used to arouse interest in Nature Study, Geography and in the process of manufacture, but for these there is nothing better than a system of individual school demonstration that is followed at Battersea, where education is given to primary and school children at a cost of 2d. each. The exhibition takes place in a local cinema. For ordinary teaching purposes the magic lantern was considered to be superior. In view of the above I do not recommend the purchase of a cinema for general use in schools and colleges. If money is available under this head it would, in my opinion, be more usefully employed in providing more magic lanterns and above all more slides." Therefore, we took no action. This was written on the 5th of August 1927 by Dr. West.

Q. I dare say you saw a telegram which came in yesterday?

A. Yes.

Q. They seem to have great faith in the use of the film for educational purposes?

A. I think myself that, in spite of the view of the Imperial Conference, if one had plenty of money to spend, it would be worth experimenting, but in Bengal, as you know, for various reasons we are short of money, and I consider it my primary duty to rescue my teachers from semi-starvation, and I am not very keen on "stunts" that cost much money unless their usefulness is absolutely demonstrated.

Q. Have you seen the use of the film in Germany and other places?

A. No.

Q. I have before me a list of annual publications of films issued for non-theatrical purposes?

A. As I said, in the peculiar circumstances of Bengal, until our finances improve, I think it would be unjustifiable to experiment in cinematographs. Our schools simply cannot afford them. But if there is money available, by all means try an experiment.

Q. In several branches of education it has been suggested that a moving picture makes a better and stronger appeal to the students than a stationary picture?

A. I saw the cinematograph used very effectively in Calcutta last year in a series of lectures on Social Hygiene and they showed very graphically the birth process. That was very effective and a large audience of Indian students seemed to appreciate it.

Q. Is it not of great value for adult education and for mass education?

A. I agree, but always assuming that our finances are satisfactory.

Q. If all your departments like the Agricultural Department, the Industries Department, Public Health and so on were to pool their resources together and had a studio of their own where they could produce Public Utility Instruction films, don't you think that even with your poor finances you would be able to do the work here satisfactorily?

A. I certainly have no hostility to the idea. I should be glad to make an experiment if it did not cost too much money.

Q. There is also the suggestion that in all such matters all the Local Governments should pool their resources together and thereby prevent a reduplication of the work in regard to producing educational and other instructional films?

A. Yes, that would certainly reduce the expense. But as a matter of fact, it would be wrong to say that Government in the Education Department have any definite views on the question. We really do not know enough of the subject to have any definite views.

Q. It is a matter in which all the four departments have to put their heads together before they can formulate their programme? I was referring to the telegram of Mr. Asquith showing that the Cinema is getting very popular?

A. As I said, I am rather dominated by the view that experiments of this kind are expensive, but if the cost could be reduced to very small dimensions, I think the experiment would be worth making.

Q. In order to reduce the cost, we should like to know the views of your Government whether they would have a local agency alone or they would like to pool their resources with other provinces? That is the idea which has been suggested in many places, and the Committee feel that greater use should be made of the cinema for educational purposes.

A. I cannot say. I have not enough technical knowledge of the cinema to know whether it would be possible to use it in the thousand scattered high schools of Bengal. The rural High Schools in Bengal are many miles from the railway stations, and whether the technical equipment necessary for the cinema can be made available in such places or not, I cannot say.

Q. That is a matter of detail which can be investigated later. I suppose you do not go to the cinema?

A. Practically never. I used to go occasionally.

Q. I saw here after coming to Calcutta a prospectus of an Educational Films Company. I do not know if you have ever heard of it. (The prospectus was handed to the witness for perusal).

A. No.

Q. I do not know if you ever came across a man named Mr. Guha who was for some years in America?

A. I have not met him.

Q. Supposing it were decided to produce educational films here, would you prefer a Government agency to produce them or a private agency?

A. The trend of my mind is in favour of a private agency, but it is a big question to answer.

**Q.** But so far it has not paid the trade to produce merely educational films. Moreover it requires technical advice constantly from the various heads of departments?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Another point would be that it would serve as a model institution for the private industry if the Government had a studio of their own, and you could produce your own films for educational and industrial purposes. Of course, there are divergent views on the subject that we should give the work to a private agency, but once the industry is well established, eventually of course it can be handed over to a private agency. But for the present it has been suggested that the Government should have a studio of their own, the Government of India acting for all the provinces?

**A.** I have no hostility to the idea, subject to my point about expense.

**Q.** I suppose your Government will consider this point and give us their views?

**A.** My Government will certainly reply to any points put to them.

**Q.** At present you are not in a position to give us any definite views on the subject?

**A.** There are no definite views which we can offer at present because we have really no materials on which to make up our mind.

**Mr. Green :** Can you tell me who runs the Battersea show, whether it is a commercial or educational concern?

**A.** I could ascertain it from Dr. West and tell you—

**Chairman :** Does he know anything about this?

**A.** He is very good on most technical aspects of education.

**Q.** Can you arrange to send him to us?

**A.** He is in Dacca. But I suppose you will be staying here for at least a week?

**Q.** We are staying here till the 23rd.

**A.** Yes, I will arrange to send for him. His name was not put up because he was in Dacca, but I will arrange for him to come.

**Mr. Green :** Am I right in supposing that the Resolution to which Dr. West refers chiefly refers to the idea that you can actually teach in schools by the cinema instead of by textbooks and by personal instruction?

**A.** After all, the primary object of visual instruction is to supplement a lesson. The lesson is the primary thing, while the visual instruction is the secondary thing. I imagine that, at any rate from the educational point of view, the magic lantern is much better than the cinema, because in the magic lantern you can keep the picture fixed when you speak about it.

**Q.** One witness in another province told us that he found from experience that the uneducated found it very hard to get anything out of the lantern slide and therefore it would be much harder to get anything out of the moving picture. Do you think it is a valid argument?

**A.** I don't altogether agree with it. I imagine that if he does not grasp the still picture, he might have no better chance of grasping it when the picture is in motion.

**Colonel Crawford :** Have the Local Government spent any money at all on films?

**A.** Speaking of the Education Department, no.

**Q.** Do you know if other departments have spent anything at all on films?

**A.** I think the Health Department have spent something, but I can't speak for them.

**Q.** Have you spent money on visual instruction?

**A.** We have spent money on magic lanterns and slides.

**Q.** Do you think you can give us figures of Government expenditure on slides?

A. We subsidise certain private agencies who use magic lanterns to do certain work for us, but it is a small amount.

Q. Was it a few hundred rupees or thousands?

A. Not many thousands any way. I can't give you the actual figures, but I can get them for you.

Q. Have you any idea whether the cinema has any effect on the masses, taking that section of the people which frequent the cinemas?

Chairman: I don't see any object in asking the witness that question because he said already that he hardly goes to cinemas.

A. My view is that films which constantly depict the life of a foreign people, and not their own, must eventually produce a very boring effect on Indian spectators.

Mr. Coatsman: The Imperial Educational Conference, I think, laid down fairly well the scope of the use of the cinema in schools. Now, if you have the necessary funds, would you use more cinemas in primary schools?

A. I may say that it is assuming an impossibility, at any rate in the present state of the Bengal finances.

Q. To put more plainly what I mean is, do you think it is equally desirable to use a cinema for such purposes as it can be used in primary schools as well as in the middle and high schools and colleges?

A. Obviously there need be no distinction made between the type of school, if you can afford it.

Q. I think you mentioned that there are about 50,000 schools in Bengal?

A. Yes, that is about the number.

Q. I suppose the majority of them are in small villages?

A. Yes, a large number of them are schools held in huts, mud buildings, and even on the verandahs of private buildings, in villages.

Q. If you want to use a cinema on any reasonable scale, you would have to have separate projectors for the different schools or at any rate for the schools that lie at a great distance from the railway station?

A. I know little about the technicalities of the cinema, but I presume that is the position.

Q. If you decide to set aside a certain amount of your budget for cinema instruction in schools, you would only be able to use it in a few favored localities?

A. Certainly. I think we shall have to give up all possibility of any general use in primary schools.

Chairman: I suppose you can take cinema lorries?

A. Lorries cannot travel without roads; Bengal is very different from, say, the Punjab in this respect.

Mr. Neogy: They will have to be taken in a cinema boat?

A. Very often there is nothing but a narrow path leading from one village to another, which is submerged in the rains.

Mr. Coatsman: I think the resolution of the Imperial Conference laid down rather a restricted scope for the use of the cinema in schools. Apart from such subjects as Nature Study, what other subjects can be taught by means of the cinema? Geography and the natural and social conditions in other countries? Do you think the cinema has a future in those subjects?

A. Certainly, if the expense can be met, and that is the assumption. I would let children see as much of that sort of thing as possible.

Mr. Neogy: Since when have you heard about the use of the magic lantern for educational purposes?

A. Some years before I became Director.

Q. Have you any comprehensive scheme for it?

A. No; we have no very comprehensive scheme.

**Q.** What are the subjects that you have so far treated in the magic lantern slides?

**A.** Hygiene and, I think, geography.

**Q.** Is it the geography of India primarily?

**A.** Not primarily.\* I suppose history could be illustrated usefully, also literature. For instance, I can imagine a film version of "Julius Caesar" making an impression on boys.

**Q.** From that point of view a larger proportion of films will have to be imported from abroad?

**A.** I think so.

**Q.** If you confine yourself to Indian subjects, you can produce the films here, but if you have to take other subjects as well, what proportion do you think the Indian subjects would form of the total?

**A.** It is difficult to say: it would depend on the curriculum.

**Q.** Have you heard of any case in which the authorities of any private school have made use of the cinema for the purpose of supplementing their instruction?

**A.** No.

**Q.** I heard only the other day that there is a school in Bhowanipore which occasionally gives instruction to its students by means of the cinema?

**A.** I have not heard of it.

**Q.** You said that you got certain slides made for your department by private agencies. Did you find their work satisfactory?

**A.** We found it quite satisfactory.

**Q.** Provided the work is satisfactory, would you prefer to have your work done by a private agency or would you recommend a Government studio to be set up for making educational films?

**A.** As I said, the trend of my mind is in favour of the work being entrusted to private agencies, but at the same time I should judge any scheme on its merits.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* I suppose there is an entertainment tax in Bengal?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** How is this money utilised here?

**A.** It goes into the general balances.

**Q.** Is it not earmarked for the improvement of education as it is done in Bombay?

*Chairman:* It is not earmarked for educational purposes there.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* So this amount is not earmarked for educational purposes?

**A.** I wish it were, speaking purely as an educationist.

**Q.** Do you think it should be used for the improvement of the cinema industry?

**A.** No.

**Q.** Is not the cinema industry a branch of education?

**A.** Only to the extent that the cinema can be used for educational purposes.

**Q.** Then you don't want even a portion of the entertainment tax to be utilised for educational purposes?

**A.** I am not in the Finance Department, but if I were I could not in my administration recognise such a narrow limitation as that.

**Q.** Would it not be a good thing if this amount were used on the cinema because the tax comes from the cinema films and theatres, and ought to go to the cinema industry?

**A.** I am afraid I could not subscribe to that point of view. I take rather a broader view of financial matters.

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\* The geography films were personal and not departmental property.



**Q.** To help this industry would you recommend students being sent abroad by giving scholarships?

**A.** Well, Mr. Weston, Director of Industries, will speak on that point. There was some discussion in his Advisory Committee, of which I am a Member, on the question as to whether we should earmark one scholarship for training for this industry. We all felt that it would be a little premature. But Mr. Weston will give you the facts on the point.

**Q.** But you say it was decided that it was rather premature.

**A.** That was the view. We selected three other industries. Government awards scholarships every year. Next year Mr. Weston should be in a position to recommend that students be sent abroad for training in this industry, if it is considered wise.

**Q.** Would you at least agree to recommend a class attached to the college of science or the school of art or something like that for the development of this industry?

**A.** If after consideration this committee comes to the conclusion that there is a future for such students, obviously it would be a good thing.

**Q.** Well, I would ask your opinion whether you yourself would recommend to the Government to open a class in the college of science or the school of art?

**A.** It would probably be preferable to make a beginning by sending one or two abroad.

**Q.** But you say it is premature.

**A.** Who is going to train these proposed classes here?

**Q.** Well, there are people who have already come from abroad. They could be utilised.

**A.** Well, if there is any opening for such students, by all means train them. The existence of such an opening is my hypothesis. I have personally no evidence to show that it would benefit the young men who go. It would depend on the capital that is likely to be forthcoming for the film industry.

**Q.** Supposing such a class is opened, will plenty of young men from the colleges and schools come forward?

**A.** Not unless their fathers can foresee a future for them. I remember the case of a man who studied the coal industry in Germany for five years, and then came back and said he could not get an opening. It is conceivable that our experience might be the same, through lack of capital being put into the industry. That however is a matter for the Director of Industries, not for me. All I can say is that if there is a probability of the capital being forthcoming and the industry being started, such young men would be well advised to come forward.

**Q.** You have a Text Book Committee here?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Wouldn't you have a committee on the same lines—a Cinema Education Committee? They will take charge of this and you will be saved all this trouble.

**A.** A Committee for doing what?

**Q.** To help the development of the industry.

**A.** A local Bengal committee to help the industry?

**Q.** Yes.

**A.** I would rather you asked Mr. Weston that question. It is really beyond my purview.

**Q.** But I think it is a question of education.

**A.** I don't think so. It is a question of the industry. Mr. Weston will reply to that question. I am hardly in a position to say whether I would like to have a committee to advise on the development of the cinema industry?

*Q.* A Cinema Education Committee. To advise the Education Department on the use of the cinema.

*A.* That is a different matter of course. There would not be much work for it to do at present, but if ever money is available for spending on cinematograph education, such a committee would be useful.

*Q.* Well, I would go further. Would you like to have a department under the Minister of Education, a Cinematograph Department?

*A.* There is not enough work for a whole department of education in connection with teaching by the cinematograph.

*Q.* There are 50 cinemas here in Bengal.

*A.* My point is that this is not education; it is industry. It has not been applied much to education yet. It may be in the future and if and when it is, we can consider it, but it is premature now.

*Q.* You don't see the cinema much?

*A.* Extremely rarely. I may be dining with some friend who have arranged to go on to the cinema.....

*Q.* At least you must have seen more of advertisements and handbills?

*A.* I have seen posters outside theatres.

*Q.* Sometimes you must have seen pictures of people kissing.

*A.* I have seen some curious posters.

*Q.* Would you like these distributed in your schools and colleges?

*A.* I should turn them out if they were exhibited there.

*Q.* I want to ask you whether you recommend that these should be censored?

*A.* We discussed that question the other day and our general view in the Education Department is that the existing police powers are sufficient. That was the view—that the police now have power to stop indecent pictures if they like.

*Q.* Under the Police Act,—or Sec. 292, I. P. C.? That is only for obscene pictures.

*Mr. Green:* Under the Presidency Town Police Act? There is one in Bombay.

*A.* Our general view is that we should be reluctant to interfere very much with the public liberty to the extent of repressing posters, except obscene and indecent ones.

*Q.* But personally you would not like to have these distributed in your schools?

*A.* Of course not—boys in schools are a different matter.

*Q.* There are certain circulars these cinema companies distribute in school and colleges too.

*A.* Well, I hope the headmaster who gets them destroys them at once.

*Q.* Your personal view is that they ought to be destroyed?

*A.* Oh, a good many of them. Many of them obviously make an appeal to sex passion and should not be allowed in schools.

*Q.* Have you ever heard a complaint that the cinema affects the eyes of young people, say under 10

*Mr. Green:* The Director of Public Health is coming this afternoon.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* I am thinking of school children.

*A.* Well, as I say, we have practically no experience on which we can form an opinion. I have heard a suggestion that it is not good for the eyes, but we have no facts. The cinema does not really touch our schools, and we have not had to investigate the point.

**Oral Evidence of Sir CHARLES TEGART, Kt., C.I.E., M.V.O.,  
Commissioner of Police, Calcutta, on Monday, the 12th December  
1927.**

*Chairman* : We are very glad you are able to come, Sir Charles.

A. Thank you.

Q. I take it you are here not on behalf of Government, but merely in your official capacity as Commissioner of Police.

A. That is so.

Q. You are not expressing any views on behalf of Government.

A. No, I am not. I am expressing my own views as Commissioner of Police.

Q. I dare say you have considerable experience of the city. Do you often go to the cinema yourself?

A. I do, fairly frequently.

Q. Who assists you? Have you got any special department who frequent the cinemas, whose duty it is to frequent the cinema?

A. Not on behalf of the police.

Q. Only on behalf of the censor board?

A. Yes.

Q. You mean the inspectors and the secretaries?

A. And the members of the Board.

Q. Do you think the cinema is getting more and more popular with the people?

A. I think so.

Q. Have you seen many Indian films?

A. No, very few, except those of a topical nature: such as processions and things of that sort.

Q. You have not seen any of these Indian religious, mythological or social pictures?

A. No. I personally have not seen them.

Q. Have you got to give any license now for the producing places?

A. Not for producing.

Q. You are the President of the Board?

A. Yes.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer* : You are not giving your evidence to-day as President of the Censor Board, but only as Commissioner of Police? You are coming again to-morrow to give evidence in your capacity as President?

A. Yes.

*Chairman* : I suppose you have been President of the Board for some years now, since it was constituted?

A. Since April 1923—not since it was constituted.

Q. Now, I think they have got to take out a license or something or other for electricity and other things in producing places.

A. No. We have nothing to do with the licensing, except in so far as if we found their arrangements were dangerous from the point of view of fire, we would step in on behalf of the fire brigade.

Q. Are you talking of the cinema shows or the producing places?

A. Of the producing places.

Q. I suppose you have a list of places where they produce pictures?

A. We have.

Q. I notice there are only four places here?

A. That is all.

**Q.** Now, can you tell us whether the cinema is being used at all for propaganda purposes, such as public health?

**A.** No. I should say, No.

**Q.** I suppose you have not got to go outside Calcutta?

**A.** No, not outside. I believe that the Eastern Bengal State Railway have shown some pictures on their train, but that does not come within my jurisdiction.

**Q.** No, it doesn't. You cannot tell whether the Indian shows are getting more and more popular with the people?

**A.** I hear that the latest production of Madans—a play called "Durgesh Nandini" is a very popular play but I am also told that plays that are popular on this side of India are not popular in Bombay.

**Q.** You would probably not be able to tell us whether any Bombay films are shown here. I see some of the Hindustani or Mahrathi films are being shown here.

**A.** Yes, there have been a few of the Bombay films shown here.

**Q.** Of course, you cannot tell us how far they are popular here?

**A.** No, the Trade could tell you.

**Q.** Do you think your Indian deputy would be able to give us any information on that point?

**A.** I think that the Indian assistant inspector of films, whom I see the committee proposes to examine, could give you an idea of it.

**Q.** Now, do you see the posters and handbills?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** And advertisements also in the newspapers?

**A.** We do.

**Q.** Of course, not in your official capacity, not because you have to censor them—but in your capacity as Commissioner of Police.

**A.** I have seen them in both capacities. Indeed it is rather hard to disentangle my two capacities. But as a cinema board we have had complaints about posters, chiefly from the military authorities. We had a complaint from the General Officer Commanding, and we also had a complaint from General Sir John Shea, on behalf of the Commander-in-Chief, saying that indecent posters had a bad effect on the troops.

**Q.** Here in Calcutta?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** On the British troops or the Indian troops?

**A.** The British troops he was referring to.

**Q.** Did they send you any samples?

**A.** The G. O. C. quoted some instances and when we looked into it, we found that several of them had been shown up in Darjeeling, which, of course, was not under our jurisdiction.

**Q.** And you found them objectionable—indecent or obscene?

**A.** Yes, we have objected—as a cinema board we have objected—to the posters and we have asked the trade here to withdraw them.

**Q.** Now, do they send you the posters or handbills?

**A.** No, they don't. There is no pre-censorship. When they came to our notice, we told the importers that we thought the posters were open to objection and asked them to withdraw them.

**Q.** Do you think it would be a practical proposition if the trade were asked to subject all their posters and advertisements to the censor board?

**A.** Yes, I see no difficulty in it.

**Q.** Do you think it will increase the quantity of work?

**A.** It would take a very very short time to see them. I don't think it would increase the work to any appreciable extent.

**Q.** A lady complained in Lucknow about a particular advertisement in the "Statesman"—a picture advertisement about a film to which she said she objected. But have you seen such advertisements in the newspapers?

**A.** Oh yes, we watch them all.

**Q.** That means rather a delicate duty, to have to interfere with the freedom of the press.

**A.** Yes, of course it is. At the present time, we can only do anything by mutual arrangement.

**Q.** I mean, would you like to have statutory powers conferred?

**A.** We have asked Government for powers to deal with posters.

**Q.** Posters only?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** What about handbills?

**A.** Handbills would come under posters.

**Q.** You think all advertisement matter and pictures should come in? What you do in regard to theatres, for instance? Take some foreign companies coming here, Revues and such things.

**A.** I have had no reason to object and I have never had complaints from any outside body regarding theatrical advertisements.

**Q.** Now, in the cases you mentioned of military officers complaining, what was the nature of the scene which was depicted?

**A.** The complaint was generally that some of the posters were indecent, of low moral tone.

**Q.** Did they come under the purview of the Police Act. Could you have stopped it under the Police Act?

**A.** No, it would never have come under the purview of the law.

**Q.** Unless you had a censor board you could never stop it?

**A.** Except by mutual arrangement.

**Q.** I suppose you find the trade generally agreeable. You don't find them troublesome?

**A.** No. We find the trade co-operate with us very well over here.

**Q.** So on the whole you think that no extra statutory power is needed?

**A.** We do think that power should be taken to censor posters and leaflets.

**Q.** And also advertisements in newspapers?

**A.** Well, we have no complaints about that. I don't know what the complaint in Lucknow was, but I personally have no complaint about advertisements in the papers. It is the advertisements on boardings that I have had complaints about.

**Q.** But the difficulty would be, if all of them were sent to you it would increase the work of the board.

**A.** Well, it might be left to the board to decide how they would deal with it. If the board were given powers, the board could see how they were going to deal with it. Those posters would be noticed immediately they were put up and if we had the power, we could order their removal.

**Q.** That means also in the district stations. What will you do in the districts?

**A.** If it was incorporated in the Act, the power would be vested in the district magistrates.

**Mr. Green :** May I ask you if the suggestion is that all these should be pre-censored by the censor board, or that power should be taken by the authorities to stop them?

**A.** All we have asked for is that power should be given us in the Act to deal with them when necessary, but we have not gone into the question as to how we would deal with them.

**Chairman :** Have you made a suggestion in writing?

A. Yes, we have on two occasions. We have asked the Local Government to put this power in the Act.

Q. Can you give us the reference to it. I don't remember coming across it. Perhaps you could send us a copy.

Mr. Neogy : I find a reference to it in the Annual Report for the year 1925—the Annual Report of the Police Administration for the town of Calcutta.

A. We put it in the Police Report and we also put it in the Annual Report of the Cinematograph Board but I will send you, if desired, a copy of our letter.

Chairman : Now, I don't propose to trouble you to-day about censorship because you will have to deal with it when you appear with the board. But what about crime films. Do you think that any crimes or any methods of crime are due to the cinema at all?

A. That of course is a very difficult question to answer. I can only say that I have had no case in which I could definitely say that the crime had been committed under the influence of the cinema. At the same time I don't think it can be gainsaid that pictures illustrative of the operations of crooks and people of that kind may have an effect on certain types of people in the towns.

Q. But you have got certain rules in your censor board dealing with such cases?

A. Oh, yes.

Q. I suppose the rules are adequate as they are?

A. Yes, we have got quite enough power under the rules.

Q. And that aspect of it is not ignored?

A. No. We pay particular attention to that aspect of it.

Q. So there is nothing particular you would recommend to be done in this matter?

A. No, nothing. As far as I am concerned, I am quite satisfied with our powers to deal with anything of that kind.

Q. That is also the opinion given to us by the heads of the police in the various provinces. That although there is a general statement in the press that crimes are due to the cinema, they cannot trace any particular case to such a cause. That is also your experience?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you think that the Indian film industry should be developed largely?

A. Yes. I would like to see it developed, if it is capable of development.

Q. From your experience of the country there is plenty of material which can be suitably filmed?

A. Yes.

Q. And it appeals specially to the Indian audiences?

A. Yes.

Q. It has been suggested that that would be one method of creating a good taste among the Indians instead of their going in for these western films. . .

A. Yes. I certainly think it would be a move in the right direction.

Q. Have you any suggestions to make as regards any extra statutory provision or provisions by way of rules needed for censorship?

A. No. I consider that the powers given under the Act are ample to deal with any case that arises, with the sole exception of the posters.

Q. Have you come across any instances in which you had to differ from other provincial Boards of Censorship?

A. Yes.

Q. In how many cases in your experience?

A. We have had several differences of opinion with the Bombay Board.

Q. But not many I take it? I do not think more than half a dozen in all these years?

A. No. More than that. 14 pictures which we banned have been passed by the Bombay Board.

*Mr. Neogy* : In what period?

*A.* Since this Board was constituted. We had one case recently which I consider personally, as a serious case, that was a film called "The Triumph of the Rat." That film was banned by the Bengal Board of Censors after very careful consideration. The importers, the Globe Theatres, appealed to Government and Government saw the picture and upheld the decision of the Board. The Globe Theatres then took the film to Bombay. I was informed by the Manager of the Globe that his reason for taking the picture to Bombay was to get it banned there so that he could get a refund on the picture, as the firm from whom he bought the picture would not refund unless it was generally banned. It was taken to Bombay and passed in Bombay.

*Q.* Have you got the records about it with you?

*A.* No. I have not got the file with me, but I will bring those papers with me when I come with the Board.

*Q.* You are aware of the fact that the length of the film shown in Bombay was much shorter than the length shown in Bengal, by nearly 2,000 feet?

*A.* That was not what the Globe Theatres told us. The Manager of the Globe Theatres told us that the film produced in Bombay was the same as the film that he showed us here.

*Q.* Apparently it was not. The Film Board saw the whole thing and they saw nothing objectionable. Some portions which had been shown to you here, were apparently omitted and then it was taken to Bombay. Further we propose to see the film here. Can you help us in seeing it?

*A.* Yes. I think the picture is here now. I asked the Globe Theatres recently and they said it was here.

*Q.* We should like to see it for ourselves. What is your opinion about certifying certain films for adults only, or certifying certain films as fit to be shown to children? Would it not obviate many of the complaints which we hear?

*A.* Our objective here is to pass pictures which we consider suitable for exhibition anywhere. We see, and I see myself, very great difficulties here in trying to pass films for adults only as it would be impossible for the box office to comply: there is no proper controlling authority here which will help the box office to say who is grown up and who is not. For instance, Indian ladies come. They are all covered up and it would be physically impossible for anybody to say whether the person is a child or is grown up. I do not think it will be practicable.

*Q.* There is difficulty also as to knowing the age particularly?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Another suggestion was that the Censorship Board might certify as a guidance to the parents and guardians, saying that the film is fit to be shown to children, or specially suitable for children. The Censorship Board will add a clause saying, 'suitable for children'.

*A.* I am not in favour of that. Although it is done at home, it seems to me that most children under 16 years would not understand the picture at all. It seems to me that the age between 16 and, say, 22 is a much more dangerous age to show pictures of doubtful morality than children under 16 who would probably not understand what was going on.

*Q.* So that you do not think that would serve a useful purpose?

*A.* I do not think so, nor do I think it is practicable.

*Q.* Is the cinema very popular with the college students here?

*A.* Yes, and my opinion is that it is becoming a growing habit.

*Q.* What percentage do you think of films which come out, contain really sex urging scenes, I mean passionate urging scenes, such as kissing, close hugging and so on?

*A.* Do you mean pictures which have an element of love in the story?

*Q.* I mean passionate love. Every picture must have an element of love, but I am talking of passionate love, scenes such as kissing the hand, the neck, etc.

A. A large percentage of them, from what I see.

Q. Of course, you recognise the difficulty of banning those films altogether?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you think they have any really demoralising effect on the people of the country?

A. I do not think they have a good effect, any way. I think the effect generally on the minds of students is bad.

Q. In any country it will be so?

A. Yes.

Q. Then what is the solution of the difficulty? You cannot ban love from films.

A. No. That is a question on which the Censor Board must adopt a definite standard and stick to it.

Q. You will leave it to the good sense of the Censor Board?

A. Yes, and I think in that respect it is most essential that the Board should maintain the standard that it has once adopted. Each picture as it is examined has got to be considered not only by itself but also with reference to the standard in the past and the effect in the future if it deviated from it.

Q. Have you seen the film "Blue Danube"?

A. I do not think I have seen it.

Q. I saw it last night.

A. But there are still very bad pictures being brought out here. We saw in the censorship what we considered to be a particularly bad picture the other day, and if the Committee would like to see it it is still here. It is a picture called "Variety"; it is a German picture.

Q. It is one of the pictures which we want to see. They say it is a very good picture?

A. Good possibly in the way of photography, but not otherwise.

Q. It has been passed I suppose?

A. No.

Mr. Green: Has it received a certificate anywhere?

A. It has received the certificate of no Board.

Chairman: Not even the British Board?

A. No.

Q. Do you generally enquire before giving a certificate whether it has been passed by the British Board of Censors?

A. We always enquire as to which of the Boards it has passed or by which it has been banned . . . .

Q. I see the application form does not provide for a column requiring such information. He is only asked to state by what Board in India it has been passed.

A. That is right. We always enquire not only whether it has been passed by any Board but whether it has been produced before any recognised Board. There are certain American Boards which pass them, constituted by the trade itself, but these we pay no attention to.

Q. Then I take it you are not in favour of prohibiting children from going to the cinema as a rule? You would leave it to the guardians?

A. Yes.

Q. To exercise their good sense?

A. As I have said, on that point I have been approached by certain associations here and I say that any parent on reading the advertisement of a picture can have a pretty good idea as to whether it is suitable for children or not. There is also here what is called an All-Fun Friday on which comics are shown and they are obviously suitable for children.



*Q.* I understand from various places, so far as the masses are concerned, they rather like comic films and adventure films, and they do not care for those sex films.

*A.* That is so. I think the most popular pictures, from the point of view of the masses, have been those serial films where adventures are shown.

*Q.* And also comic films?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* The social dramas do not appeal to them so much?

*A.* Not so much, I think.

*Q.* It is more to the detriment of the youth which you have in mind, between the impressionable age of 16 to 24,—college students?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Last night I noticed whenever a kissing scene was shown it evoked a sort of shout. Have you ever tried to understand what was meant by that?

*A.* I have noticed that. In all these scenes where passion is shown it evokes.

*Q.* I thought they were mostly young men, either clerks or students, who were there,—a shout went up, but I could not make out what it was?

*A.* It was a shout of approval I think. I have noticed it almost invariably when I am at the pictures, if a scene of that kind is shown.

*Q.* You go to those places where Europeans and Indians gather I suppose?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Do the English people take part in that shout? Take for instance the soldiers.

*A.* I do not think you would find soldiers among the shouters. I think it is the Indian element, the student and clerk element, that does it.

*Q.* Supposing it was made a rule that every film should be examined by two or more members of the Board, do you think that you would be able to get men of suitable standing to do the work of censoring here? Supposing we enlarged the Board and made panels from time to time so that 2 or more members might see each film before it is passed?

*A.* The larger the Board the more difficult it is to adopt a uniform standard.

*Q.* That is true.

*A.* And also the Board would have to be permanent. At the present time our Board is appointed for a year. It is true Government, realising the necessity for continuity in the standard of the Board, appoint as far as possible the same people year after year. But the members are appointed only for a year. Government only nominate 2 members of the Board, the remaining five are elected by public bodies, such as the Chamber of Commerce, the trade . . .

*Q.* Do they elect or nominate?

*A.* They nominate.

*Q.* Government finally appoints?

*A.* Yes. They nominate and Government, in every case, accepts their nominee. We have our pictures examined by the Inspector and on his report either a sub-committee is appointed or a provisional certificate is issued. But we have a further check in that on the first day on which any new picture is shown at the theatre a member of the Board visits the theatre and sees the picture. That is invariably the rule. So we have a further check.

*Q.* I suppose you have had no complaints from the members who so visit that there has been laxity?

*A.* They make comments occasionally

*Q.* But I mean nothing of a serious character so as to show that there is any defect in the system?

*A.* No.

*Q.* Have you had many complaints from the public at all about any film shown?

A. Not recently.

Q. Nor in the press?

A. No.

Q. Of course, we were told that the press are in the pay of the exhibitors more or less, because they get a large amount from advertisements of the pictures.

A. But we have a more critical public.

Q. You did not hear from the public?

A. No.

Mr. Neogy : One man told us that he actually sent a critical article to one of the papers but it refused to publish it because it would be deprived of its advertisement income.

Chairman : Do you notice any tendency to improve the standard of the films now being shown?

A. Yes, I think it is steadily improving. I think the trade and the Board are gradually working closer together.

Q. I suppose the trade gets into touch with the producers and they improve the tone?

A. Yes. As you know they are under great difficulties with this block system. They will explain it. That is a great handicap.

Q. That is a matter which we will take up with the trade. Here in India the circumstances are such that really they must know beforehand what it is they are booking. However, we will take up that matter with the trade; it is not right to trouble you on that point. You find the trade generally agreeable to accept your suggestions?

A. Yes.

Q. Have you heard any complaints about the military not getting the proper films they want? Are they adequately supplied?

A. There is a military representative on the Board and he has never brought up that question.

Sir Haroon Jaffer : Is it not rather awkward for one person to be in two capacities namely, one of Police Commissioner and another of President of the Censor Board. There is Mr. Evans, the Cinema Expert brought by the Government of India. He says in his report that the censoring committees are weak and inexperienced. What have you to say about this as Police Commissioner?

A. I would beg to differ with him as far as our Board is concerned.

Mr. Green : This is a report of several years ago. It was in 1921 or so.

A. Our Board was brought into being only in 1921 and naturally it was inexperienced then.

Sir Haroon Jaffer : Do you find the same position or has it improved now?

A. It is rather invidious for me to say, but I think we have improved.

Q. Since the entertainment tax came into being, do you think the audience is growing in the theatres?

A. I do not think that the entertainment tax has seriously hit the industry. I do not think that the trade can prove that it has seriously affected the receipts.

Chairman : Can you tell us who can give us the figures of the entertainment tax?

A. You can get it from the Finance Department of the Government.

Q. When did the tax come into force?

A. I think in 1922. Shall I get them for you?

Q. I shall be obliged. We would like to have figures year by year from the cinema and class by class. Of course, 4 annas seats are exempt from the tax?

A. Yes.

*Q.* We would like to have the figures class by class.

*A.* I do not know if they will be able to give such figures, but I will endeavour to get them.

*Mr. Neogy :* Is it a fact that the entertainment tax has been abolished in regard to the theatres?

*A.* Yes, I believe so.

*Q.* Only lately?

*A.* Yes, as the theatres were able to prove that they were practically in a bankrupt condition owing to the tax.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer :* Have the cinema people come forward to prove . . .

*A.* They have approached Government, I believe so.

*Q.* And the Government have decided that they should continue the tax in respect of the cinema?

*A.* Government have not taken it off.

*Q.* Is it true that the Indian States provide a profitable market for indecent films?

*Chairman :* He does not know.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer :* You have seen both British films and American films?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* You think the British films have the same kind of bad flavour?

*A.* Yes, we have noticed objectionable British films, for example, "The Triumph of the Rat". Last year we had to deal with several British films.

*Q.* You have given us your opinion about bad films. But there are certain American films which are faked films. Don't you think they ought to be totally banned, films showing things which are not real?

*A.* What do you mean by faked?

*Mr. Neogy :* Those that show impossible stunts.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer :* And people who see them go and try them at home.

*A.* I have read of that, but I have no personal experience of any such case. Those stunts are generally shown in comic films which we like to encourage.

*Q.* What arrangements have you made to stop any indecent films being brought in by steamer crews?

*A.* That does not come within our jurisdiction at all. That is a matter for the customs authorities.

*Q.* Are the cinema houses here licensed?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Where does the fee go to? To the Corporation or the Government?

*A.* Fees levied under the Cinematograph Act are one of the heads of receipts of the Cinema Board. They go to the Cinema Board. Of course, the Municipality have their own taxes on all buildings, but the licensing fees under the Act are credited to the Cinema Board.

*Q.* There was a complaint made that a lot of free passes have to be given to the police by the cinema theatres.

*A.* Is it a complaint in Calcutta?

*Q.* Is the same condition prevalent here?

*A.* Nobody in the trade has ever made any complaint to me of that nature

*Q.* Do you think such is the case here?

*A.* I hope not, and I have no reason to believe it is the case, because I am in close touch with the proprietors of cinema houses and they have not complained to me about any such thing.

*Q.* If such a complaint is made will you make enquiries?

*A.* Yes, certainly.

*Q.* To stop the indecent posters, have you any kind of power under the Police Act?

A. No.

Q. We were told by the Director of Public Instruction just now that there was such power under the Police Act.

A. There is no power to touch posters of that kind.

Q. There is no such section in the Town Police Act. . . .

A. None of the posters I have seen can possibly be brought within the purview of any section of the Police Act.

Mr. Neogy : They are not positively indecent, but merely suggestive?

A. Yes. There is a wide gap between a suggestive picture and a picture which is indictable.

Q. You could take effective action if the posters were positively indecent under your Police powers?

A. Yes, but they do not approach that standard.

Sir Haroon Jaffer : When certain films are rejected, I am told they are re-imported under new titles.

A. I have never seen such a case. They have not been presented to this Board. I do not know, they might have been produced before some other Board.

Chairman : I do not think there is any evidence of that?

A. I do not know; they might have been brought in.

Sir Haroon Jaffer : Do you see the certificates of origin yourself?

A. If they say that a picture has been passed by a certain Board, they have got to produce the certificate of the Board which passed the picture.

Q. How many such films you think have come from America during the last one month?

A. The films that have come from America show, in some cases, that they have been passed there by local Boards connected with the Trade but we do not recognise them here.

Q. How many films came here with the American certificates?

A. I could not say definitely.

Q. I want to know whether the films are censored at the place of origin when certificates are brought with the films?

A. As far as I know there is no such procedure in action.

Mr. Neogy : I suppose the certificate of any foreign film would be shown on the trailer of the film?

A. We call for the advertisement of the film which is shown in advance of the picture itself. As I said, we do not recognise the certificate of certain American Boards because they are believed to be connected with the trade, and we pay no attention to a certificate issued by such Boards.

Sir Haroon Jaffer : What about the English films?

A. In some cases where the British Board of Censors censor a film it issues a certificate.

Q. Do you advocate that censorship should be exercised at the place of origin and certificates should be brought here with the films?

A. We don't mind whether they have or they have not got a certificate. We censor a picture on its merits. Even if they bring a certificate, I don't think it would materially help us because many a time we have to deal drastically with certain films in view of local conditions.

Mr. Neogy : A witness in Bombay solemnly assured us that motor car dacoities in Bengal could be definitely traced to the influence of the cinema. Are you in a position to confirm this?

A. No, I have no evidence which would support that suggestion.

Q. Some other witness told us elsewhere that a very large proportion of the Goondas go to the cinemas and learn the tricks and new methods of crime. Is that your experience?

A. No.

Q. You referred to certain indecent posters which had to be removed with the assistance of the trade itself. Now, all these posters generally purport to reproduce the actual scenes in the film, is that not so?

A. Yes.

Q. Is it your experience that certain posters did not correspond to the scenes actually contained in the film?

A. Generally speaking, the posters purport to reproduce the actual scenes contained in the picture, but I don't think that they would bear a minute comparison in all cases.

Q. What proportion of the films that you have seen represents the under world life and cabaret dancing?

A. Possibly 10 per cent.

Q. Do you pass such pictures in the Board of Censors?

A. The trade know that we don't approve of such pictures on principle. If such scenes merely form an incident in a story, we excise or curtail them considerably if they appear.

Q. You stated just now that there is a tendency for the standard of the films to be improved. I find that in 1925 you approached the American Consul for the transmission of certain views with regard to the undesirable character of certain films which generally come from America and generally acquainting the producers there with the standard of censorship which you adopt in this country. Have you any reason to believe that that has borne any fruit?

A. I would hesitate to say definitely that it has. It has at any rate acquainted the producers with the type of picture that we disapprove of here as a Board, but it is also somewhat too early to pronounce any opinion as to what effect our representations have made on them; I would not like to say anything definite about the effect one way or the other.

Q. Do I take it then that you are in touch with Foreign Consuls in this matter?

A. Yes, we have also had correspondence with the German Consul; we have also discussed the matter with the French Consul.

Q. Also perhaps with the British authorities in England?

A. No, we have had no direct correspondence with them.

Q. Are you satisfied with your present standard of censorship when you say that you would lay great stress on a uniform standard to be adopted by the Board of Censors?

A. Yes.

Q. Coming to the constitution of the Board, I am not quite sure whether all the members are not nominated by Government?

A. Only two are nominated by Government; one is nominated by the Calcutta Corporation, one by the Bengal Chamber of Commerce, one by the Calcutta Trades Association, one by the Education Department, one by the military authorities. As I said, two are nominated by Government and the Commissioner of Police is *ex-officio* President.

Q. How many Indians are there on the Calcutta Board?

A. At present we have two Indians, Mr. Mukherjee, representing the Corporation and Mr. Ahmad representing the Education Department, out of 8 members. That does not include the Commissioner of Police. There are 8 members of whom 2, at present, are Indians.

Q. Do you consider that that constitution is satisfactory from the Indian point of view?

A. I think it provides the Indian community with sufficient opportunities for expressing their views.

Q. Are you aware that there is a larger proportion of Indians on the Bombay Board?

A. I do not know that.

Q. What proportion of the audiences in Calcutta do Indians form?

A. It differs in different theatres, but the majority are Indians.

Q. Having regard to that fact, do you think that 2 out of 8 is a satisfactory proportion on the Board of Censors, because, after all, the tastes of Indians have to be judged by Indians?

A. We have so far had no complaints to show that the Indian community has not had an opportunity to voice its opinion to the Board through their representatives.

Q. You generally constitute sub-committees to examine films in certain instances. Do you invariably include Indians in such committees?

A. No, not invariably. If we did we should have to make the Indians do very much more work.

Q. Don't you think that it will be better from your point of view to have an Indian associated with such inquiries always?

A. Not always. The constitution of the Board depends largely on the nature of the picture to be examined. Each picture has to be considered on its merits.

Q. Do you think the association of an Indian would be undesirable in any particular instance?

A. No, certainly not.

Q. They may not be helpful, is that your point of view?

A. I would not say that, but we cannot work with an unwieldy Board and the Sub-Committees that we use here are composed of two members. We don't think it is necessary to have more members, but if in any particular picture we have doubts, then a larger Sub-Committee or the whole Board sees it.

Mr. Coatsman: I think you said that you had not noticed any direct demoralising effect from the cinema in Calcutta. Do you know of any Indian cabaret which has recently been started here?

A. No, but I was recently told that the cinema had an effect on Indian *purdah* ladies, that after seeing these free and easy western films they were not so docile at home!

Q. Do you think films showing, for example, the exploits of "Raffles" would be undesirable?

A. I would not like to generalise on subjects of that kind, as I think each picture has to be seen and judged on merits. If I saw a picture containing any highly ingenious methods of committing crime which are likely to capture the imagination of the public or appeal to the public, I should feel inclined to excise it.

Q. You don't think there is much chance that such a film would get through the Board?

A. No.

Q. I would like to know your view on one more point. If the Board passes a film, could you, as President and Commissioner of Police, override the rest of the Board?

A. There is power under the Act. Section 7, clause 5, allows the District Magistrate or, in a Presidency Town, the Commissioner of Police to suspend the certificate of any film pending the orders of the Local Government. Under this clause, if the Board of Censors passed a picture, the Commissioner of Police could suspend the certificate and refer the matter to Government.

Q. Can you see any scope for the use of the cinema in police training? Could you teach, for instance, traffic control by well taken films of the London Police? If you want to introduce the London system in Calcutta, would you import a man from London or would you teach them by means of the film?

A. We are already following where possible the London system; we work it ourselves, and we did not find any insuperable difficulties. In any case, I don't think it will be practicable, because the conditions of traffic in London and Calcutta are very different.

*Chairman* : Can't you use the cinema in your police training school as a useful adjunct?

A. We never have used the cinema in our schools.

Q. Can't you show the policemen how to handle big crowds and so on by means of the cinema?

A. I don't think it will be practicable.

*Mr. Coatsman* : Suppose at a big fair where there are crowds numbering about a hundred thousand people you were able to show a film depicting the methods of pickpockets, won't it be useful to the police?

A. It would be very expensive to prepare such pictures, and I am very doubtful if Government would sanction this expenditure. My own opinion is that the results would not be commensurate with the expense of producing a picture.

*Chairman* : Would it not broaden the views of the police? Won't they be able to draw lessons from the way in which the police behave in London?

A. Perhaps the reverse might also be true.

Q. But I think you will agree that the London police have got many lessons to give us?

A. If we had a series of films illustrating matters of that kind, I should be very glad to show them in our training schools, but it would be very expensive, and I don't think the Government would sanction the expenditure.

*Colonel Crawford* : I suppose you have no experience of producing any obscene films in Calcutta?

A. No.

Q. Do you consider it would be a good thing to license all studios?

A. I do think so, and powers should be given to inspect the studios.

Q. On the question of posters, have you asked for powers for yourself in your capacity as Commissioner of Police or for the Board?

A. We have asked powers for the Board and not for the police.

Q. Would you advocate the censorship of posters?

A. What I would be inclined to do would be to direct the Inspector when he sees a picture to ask whether there are any posters or not and if they are in any way of such a nature as are likely to be taken exception to. In the first instance I should be inclined to accept the reply of the importer on that point, but if he lets me down once, I would examine every poster. But I would not necessarily assume that the poster did not show what is exactly contained in the film.

Q. I was interested in what you said about the difficulty of preventing children from going to the cinema. I heard from a lady who had taken her children to a cinema who were under 12 years of age that they got so tremendously excited at seeing some pictures that they had actually to be removed from the theatre. Do you think it would be desirable to introduce any legislation to prevent such pictures being exhibited to children under 12?

A. I would be definitely opposed to any legislation which cannot be worked in practice, and unless you can make a watertight rule it is much better not to have any rule of that kind at all.

Q. You don't think that the fact that it is prohibited would not more or less automatically lead parents not to take their children to cinemas?

A. We as a Board do not pass any picture that we think could not be shown to anybody.

Q. You are taking it on moral grounds. There are some pictures which are too strong for young children, and some of those pictures produce a very bad and depressing effect on young minds?

A. I don't think it will be practicable. It would not be necessary to have legislation in this matter. On the other hand, it would be desirable to draw the attention of the Board to this aspect of the question. Our Board has never had their attention particularly directed to this point, but if any representative body here drew the attention of the Board to this point, we could as a Board, when passing each picture, make a note as to whether some parents are likely to take exception to it on the grounds you mention.

Q. I understand that in America there is a form containing three columns which have to be filled in by the Board. The general idea is to show whether a film is suitable or not from every point of view, and this form is published, and parents can look at it before taking their children to the cinemas?

A. There would be no difficulty in the Board doing it, but it would be a good thing if the Board were helped by expert advice from the mothers.

Q. You said that the members of your Board visit the theatres to see every film on the first night it is shown here. Does it cover all the theatres in Calcutta?

A. It only covers the main theatres, that is the west-end theatres, in all cases and certain others too, if necessary.

Q. During our investigations we found a very definite handicap about communal limitations as regards Indian produced films. As a police officer, do you consider it has much force? For instance, the Punjab Government have produced a Co-operative Credit Society film showing the working of the co-operative credit society amongst ryots who are encouraged to go to the society instead of to a money lender; the objection arose because the money lender represented there is a Hindu. Is it essential that attention should be paid to these points from a police point of view?

A. Speaking generally, I would say "yes" as the police are now particularly vigilant in watching anything which is likely to stir up communal trouble.

Q. It is very hard for the Indian producer to produce a picture that does not bring in something of a communal nature?

A. But would it be necessary in dealing with a money lender to show him definitely as a Hindu?

Q. I only cited quite a small instance, but that was enough to ban the film.

*Chairman:* Generally in that part of the country the Hindus are the money lenders and the Mussalmans are the borrowers.

A. I should have thought that the producers might have been able to get round the difficulty.

Q. It is more the dress than the caption, is it not? Do you think such objections should be listened to?

A. That particular objection appears somewhat frivolous.

*Colonel Crawford:* I should like to have your view from the police point of view?

A. I don't think any such picture has come before us so far.

Q. Have you seen the film called "Sacrifice"?

A. No.

Q. As a general question, what do you think of the general standard of the story as exhibited by western films?

A. Generally very poor.

*Mr. Green:* Did you meet the deputation from the Social Hygiene delegation when they visited India, Dr. Lees and Mrs. Neville Rolfe?

A. I met Mrs. Neville Rolfe.

Q. There is a statement made by them in which they say that the evil influences of the cinema were cited by the educationists as one of the major factors tending to increase the dissemination of disease. You told us



that the cinema has not had any serious effect on crime. But do you agree with this alleged statement of certain educationists?

A. I certainly would not put it as high as that at all. I would not be prepared to put it higher than the fact that some of the pictures shown might possibly have an effect on some of the audience.

Q. As regards "The Triumph of the Rat," it might be worth stating that our information is that the length as definitely approved in Bombay was 2,000 feet shorter than the length of the film as seen in Calcutta. If the owner did not want the film certified, he would surely not have cut it.

A. Well, of course, I am only telling you what Mr. Laharry of the Globe Theatre has told me personally, and the Board as a whole.

Q. They assured the Bombay Board in the first place that they had not shortened it.

A. The difference between the length as stated to the Bombay Board and the length as exhibited to us was about 2,000 feet.

Q. You are satisfied with your statutory power to suspend any film which has been certified by another board? You think it is a sufficient safeguard?

A. Yes, I do.

Q. If there is the power to suspend, is there any reason why there should not be a power for one board, disagreeing with another board, to certify—as at present?

A. I don't quite follow that question.

Q. We have the power given by the Act for any film to be suspended. That is to say, it authorises one authority to set his opinion up against that of another. Is there any reason why the converse should not apply? Must one board invariably accept the opinion of another board?

A. No, not necessarily. But what I feel is that in the case of boards differing, there should be a definite, a clear-cut decision of some central authority,—in the case of dispute.

Chairman : There is one question I should like to ask. Are there any cabarets or night clubs in Calcutta?

A. No.

Q. Neither European nor Indian?

A. No.

Sir Haroon Jaffer : As regards the constitution of the board, the Bengal Government intended to appoint a lady representative and probably has done so. The Bengal Government has written to the Government of India to that effect?

A. Yes, there is a lady representative nominated by the Government on the board.

### **Oral Evidence of Mr. A. T. WESTON, M.Sc., M.I.C.E., M.I.E., Officiating Director of Industries, Bengal, on Monday, the 12th December 1927.**

Chairman : Mr. Weston, you are the Director of Industries of this province?

A. That is so, Sir.

Q. How long have you been Director?

A. I have been Deputy Director since 1920 during which time I have officiated two or three times as Director. At present I am officiating.

Q. I suppose you are now speaking in your individual capacity?

A. I am now speaking purely in my individual capacity.

Q. All the more valuable. Have you anything to do with the studios now producing films? Have you seen them at all?

4. No, Sir, I have not. I have only been approached once in the last six years by one film company,—the Taj Mahal Film Company. And as I could not go myself, I sent one of my officers down to inspect them. So to that extent we have done a little, and I can read to you what action we took on that. This is the only record that we have of any endeavour to establish the industry, as far as we are concerned as the Department of Industries. “Visited a studio and workshop of the Taj Mahal Film Company at Dum Dum on the 20th December 1922. Mr. S. K. Bhaduri directs the production of films and Mr. D. N. Sanyal is the cameraman. Mr. Bhaduri has some reputation as a cinema artist and he formerly used to direct the production of new films by Messrs. J. F. Madan & Co. Mr. D. N. Sanyal also used to work as a cameraman of J. F. Madan & Co. Both these gentlemen have severed their connection with the above firm, and have started this Film Company. I also met quite a number of artists who assist in the production of the films. The workshop is situated in a nice garden house with beautiful sceneries (this is my officer's report). They have a scene room where they hold a fair stock of scenes for the production of different stage plays. The films are photographed on a Pathé camera and the negatives are then produced in a dark room fitted with electric lights. The capacity of their developing baths is 4,000 to 5,000 feet of films in 24 hours. The developed films are next printed in an American printing machine of latest design. This works automatically with electric motor and has the printing capacity of a hundred thousand feet of film in 24 hours. The machine was stated to be worth Rs. 15,000.

They have also an old type of printing machine which they are not using at present. The printed films are next dried in wooden drums at the ordinary temperature. The drums are rotated by means of electric motors, and a blast of air is blown by means of electric fans. The drying of each batch of film takes about an hour. They have got two drums each 6' long and 3' diam. Each film generally stands 1,200 shows and it has been estimated by them that a film with an average length of 4,000 to 5,000 feet can fetch Rs. 40,000 at least from India alone and the cost of production of such a film would be about Rs. 15,000. They have already produced 3 films of an average length of 4,000 feet. Two of them have already been exhibited at Calcutta with success. The Company is a private partnership company and they have invested about Rs. 50,000 as follows:

	Rs.
Block in scene, camera, printing machines, etc.	30,000
Expenses incurred in producing the films	20,000

In my opinion, the business is carried on by responsible men and I consider them fully competent to produce industrial films for which they have asked for our recommendation.”

On that I gave them a letter which they subsequently asked me if they might publish. I gave them liberty to use it. My letter said:

“The company has already produced three films each of an average length of 4,000 feet which have been exhibited in Calcutta with successful results. It is now desirous of expanding its activities with the object of producing industrial films for advertisement and propaganda purposes and is already in collaboration with the agent of the Indian Tea Cess Committee in this regard. Advertisement and propaganda work in connection with production of industries has been the subject of considerable development by means of cinematograph films in America and European countries. There is scope for the same class of work in this country, and the Taj Mahal Film Company possess the necessary capacity and experience for undertaking this work and thus building up a capacity for the utilization of this medium of development on the spot. The Director of Industries will therefore gladly recommend to any industrial concern desirous of utilising this capacity that a trial order should be given. I regret that at the present juncture it is not possible for the Government of Bengal to utilise this means of propaganda in connection with the exhibitions and demonstrations organised under the auspices of this

department on account of financial stringency, but should favourable financial conditions recur, the Director of Industries would be glad to give further consideration . . ."

These favourable financial conditions never did recur, so I have no more experience on this matter.

*Q.* Then have they done anything?

*A.* That I cannot tell you. I have had no further application for help from that particular concern and it has not come within the scope of my duties since then.

*Q.* Therefore, apparently you believe in the potentiality of this instrument for propaganda purposes?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* In agriculture and industries, as a machinery for general mass education?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* And as giving them ideas of other countries?

*A.* Yes. I have already suggested to my Government that we should utilise such a film in connection with, for example, the tanning industry. I could show the extraordinary contrast in results which obtain from the present process followed by the *chamars*, their crude method of tanning, as compared with the comparatively simple organised tannery on modern lines well within the capacity of a small district town or village community.

*Q.* And so in every department of industry this will be useful as a means of educating the people in improved methods?

*A.* I think so. We explored this possibility before and I asked a Mr. Bulchand—the gentleman who came to see me originally about five years ago.

*Q.* Is that the Karachi man?

*A.* He then had an office in Park Street in Calcutta. He came and asked me if we could not use this film. And I said I would be very glad to consider the matter, and I said: "What would it cost to make such a film and how much would you want to charge Government to show it—free exhibition?" He gave me a figure which came in the result to Rs. 10,000 and I asked Government to allow me to put Rs. 10,000 in my budget for an experiment on these lines. But as I have explained to you, we have been through a very severe financial famine in Bengal and it had to be excluded.

*Mr. Green:* Do you remember what length of film that Rs. 10,000 was for?

*A.* It was for 4,000 feet—that is Rs. 2-8 a foot.

*Chairman:* A completed positive—one copy?

*A.* Yes, and that was to be the property of Government afterwards.

*Q.* He was going to sell it to you. And what was the film you wanted?

*A.* Well, I suggested as a start a film on the tanning industry—because the Department of Industry has a research model tannery, and in that tannery we have developed simple methods within the resources of Bengal, for both the chrome and the vegetable system of tanning, to advantage.

*Q.* And it fell through for want of finance?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Supposing your department and the Agricultural Department and the Education Department and the Public Health Department were to combine,—each of you want some film or other—supposing you pool your resources together and start a studio of your own in order to produce these things?

*A.* I should not *prima facie* support that suggestion.

*Q.* Why not?

*A.* Because I don't believe that we—even five departments of that kind—could maintain a studio fully employed and therefore give economic results to the Government and to the public.

**Q.** But as a field where you will employ experts, say for instance in photography, and whose services can be indented upon by the industry to produce films for entertainment purposes, it will be a model, as it were, for other pioneers in the department, in that field of industry?

**A.** Yes, a very expensive model.

**Q.** True, but don't you think it is worth while doing it in order to encourage the growth of the industry in the country? May I put it to you in another way? Do you know that in Japan five years ago they were importing all their films from outside?

**A.** I can imagine that.

**Q.** And now within five years they are not importing more than 5 per cent. The rest of it they are producing in their own country, even for entertainment purposes. I suppose you attach great value to producing films in this country?

**A.** I am beginning to see there is a great value in it. But I am bound to say that the public have not pressed on our department for this kind of development which would have given me evidence to suppose that it had its value.

**Q.** I know the public are immersed in politics, as you call it, and they let these things go by default. These things are not engaging the attention of the public in the way they ought to. But I mean, instead of allowing other interests to capture the country, don't you think the country should awake to the importance of the cinema?

**A.** I should say so certainly.

**Q.** And when I say the country, the Government is also included in it?

**A.** Yes, I should say so, certainly.

**Q.** There has been some attempt at producing films in your province so far as we are able to see. Some films have been produced?

**A.** My impression is—but it is only an impression—we have not got either the means or the staff to go round and make a searching inquiry as to what the position is—As I say it has not been brought to my notice sufficiently emphatically to justify my taking any action. What impression there is in my mind is that there is practically nothing being done in Bengal.

**Q.** Yes, that is the impression one would gather. Now, there are certain suggestions which have been made which I will put before you for your opinion. For instance, it has been suggested that the technique of the Indian films is very poor. The acting, the story-writing and such like things connected with the film industry. It has been suggested that certain scholarships should be provided for deserving youths to be sent abroad for learning their part of the work?

**A.** I should be in sympathy with that idea. I proposed that to my Board the other day and they agreed that there was some ground for believing that it would be useful but they put it rather low on the list.

**Q.** That is what I heard this morning from the Director of Public Instruction. The second suggestion put forward was that the Government should start a studio of their own for producing films which they require for their propaganda purposes, for the purposes I have mentioned, which may be availed of by private people engaged in the industry. Supposing Government started a studio they would necessarily have to import some good experts on the technical side,—I do not mean technique connected with the branch, but technique connected with photography, story writing, acting, etc. So, it will be a studio which, when it is idle for Government purposes, can be used by the people engaged in the industry for producing films which they want to produce. They may also use the services of your experts, take advice, take instruction, and in that way Government can aid the industry?

**A.** I agree that it would be a possible one, but it is not one that I would advise.

**Q.** Why do you think so?

A. My experience is that Government controlling commercial or industrial concerns is very largely handicapped by the very necessary control which is exercised by Government in the public interest. It has not got the initiative or the freedom of enterprise that should be available for any industrial or commercial undertaking.

Q. That is your main objection to producing films yourself which you require for your own department? You would rather have them produced by private agencies?

A. Yes.

Q. And you will give them such aid as you think they need?

A. Yes. I would freely give them our aid, and I would make arrangements for the subject matter of their films. I would do that, but the actual photography and reproduction would be done on a commercial basis.

Q. You think you can rely on private enterprise for that purpose?

A. I think so.

Q. Have you got any system of making cheap loans for long terms to industries of this kind?

A. I am sorry to say that the Government of Bengal has not yet got a State Aid to Industries Act at its command in this province.

Q. I think conditions in this province do require such aid, not only with regard to this industry but, generally, as regards every industry?

A. I have represented that too to my Government many, many times.

Q. Are you in charge of technical education in this province?

A. I am.

Q. Do you think any vocational classes for this purpose in photography, acting, story writing, etc., can be introduced in any of the schools or colleges?

A. Yes. We have the Calcutta Technical School available and we are just in the process of developing it. I am now working out a class for plumbing, another for electric wiring, another for wireless telegraphy, and if it was shown to the Governing Body of my school of which I am the President, that there was scope for this industry, I would get the expert and we would pay the expert to lecture, or even to conduct demonstrations, say, two evenings a week or something like that. We have the equipment and the school for that.

Q. Here we understand that there is a lot of theatrical talent available; the Indian theatres especially seem to thrive very well?

A. That I could not express any opinion upon.

Q. You have not embarked upon this more because of want of funds?

A. That has been our difficulty.

Q. Don't you think that some provinces are well situated while others are not so well situated, and don't you think that in a matter like that where we have propaganda purposes, whether in industries, agriculture, public health or anything else, if all the Local Governments can pool their resources together and produce such films or help in producing such films, that will prevent multiplicity of expense and also reduplication of work?

A. Yes. I think a publicity officer or a publicity committee which could co-ordinate these would serve a very useful purpose. I must say I felt that there was difficulty in establishing contact. We felt it enough in regard to organising this demonstration train on the Eastern Bengal Railway. That has not been an easy matter, but that is a much more tangible object than this sort of thing. So I can imagine, and I would be prepared to believe, that this sort of publicity committee or publicity officer would be of great value.

Q. There are some things on which you can usefully impart instruction by means of foreign films by having a general library from which you can distribute to the various provinces?

A. Yes.

**Q.** And in addition produce local films containing local characteristics also on those subjects?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** For such a purpose a central organisation would be preferable, would it not?

**A.** I think there is a great deal to be said for a central organisation.

**Q.** With, of course, the right of the provinces to be represented in that central organisation to bring to notice all the provincial peculiarities?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Do you think you can get the youths of this country to take part in the film industry in acting, etc.? Have you sufficient experience of that?

**A.** I could not say.

**Q.** Perhaps the Principals of colleges might be able to give us an idea?

**A.** Yes. I do not think my opinion will be of great value on that point.

**Q.** Do you go to the cinema much yourself?

**A.** Only occasionally.

**Q.** Then I won't trouble you.

**Mr. Green:** You told us that you were approached by this Taj Mahal Company, and since then you have had no applications?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** I take it that that means one of two things, either there is absolutely nothing doing in the trade, or else they are getting on all right without your help?

**A.** I should think myself there is nothing doing.

**Q.** You do believe that there is nothing doing?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** We are told that there are four companies which are producing at present, the Aurora Cinema Company, the Indian Kinema Arts, the Lakshmi Vilas Producing Company, and the Madan Theatres?

**A.** I understand that the only substantial one is Madan's concern.

**Q.** You told us that you were attracted at one stage.

**A.** Am attracted.

**Q.** You are still attracted by the idea of propaganda films, but you find the cost of Rs. 10,000 for a 4,000 feet film is very much beyond you?

**A.** When I can do a great deal more for Rs. 10,000 in my demonstration parties both in tanning and in handloom weaving than I could by putting it on one film...

**Q.** I think we have had evidence before us that prices have come down considerably. It has also been put before us very forcibly that the real trouble about films is the overhead charges. If they are put on one film they are naturally heavier, but if they are spread over a number of films they are obviously very much less. I put this as a pendant to the Chairman's question about the formation of a central studio for the whole of India. The central studio might be able to turn out the tanning film that you are thinking of at a cost, say, initial copy, of Rs. 10,000, but if it were available for other purposes, it might reduce the cost considerably. But do you think a film of that nature, suitable for Bengal, would also be suitable as it stood for other provinces?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** I ask that question again because we have heard a good deal about provincial differences, that in Bombay they won't like a Bengal film because they are not used to seeing uncovered heads. But any process of that nature which you have mentioned would be of universal interest?

**A.** Yes, I think so.

**Q.** I take it that the films appertaining to your department in particular would suffer less from any provincial differences than the rest?

**A.** Yes. I do not anticipate any difficulty. All Directors of Industries are up against the same problem.

**Chairman :** Have you had any conference of Directors of Industries where this question was considered?

**A.** We have had no conference since 1922, since the reforms came in, as we used to have before. I also had some quotations for a similar film from Messrs. Madans Theatres, Limited.

**Q.** What did they quote?

**A.** They quoted for the negative film Rs. 2 per foot, the first positive print eight annas per foot and subsequent positive prints four annas per foot, the negative to be our property.

**Q.** What date is that?

**A.** On the 27th June 1925. To the same enquiries which were made by another of my officers then—without consulting me apparently he took this matter up,—the Provincial Health Cinema Company quoted “Re. 1-6 per running foot for positive film (first copy) and eight annas per running foot for subsequent copies. If the negative film is to be the Government property, the extra charge will be Rs. 2 per foot. The size to be of the standard size, and the charge for exhibiting to be Rs. 50 per day, excluding travelling and halting allowances of two men.”

**Mr. Green :** Film producing companies, we have it in evidence, are hard put to it to produce such entertainment films as they can, at any rate, in Bombay where there are a number of companies operating. They have not got the time to produce propaganda films. If they produce them they will obviously charge very heavily so as to cover the waste of their time. It is quite possible in course of time that they will be able to satisfy the demand for commercial films and also turn out work for Government. But so long as their terms are prohibitive, if it is established by this Committee and other enquiries that they are prohibitive, does your objection to Government running their own studio still hold?

**A.** Yes. It is a fundamental objection.

**Q.** I take it you object to Government running it because they cannot run a commercial show?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** In that you have my entire sympathy. My point is, will this be a commercial show? They want to produce something for purely propaganda purpose, public health, education and so forth?

**A.** I take it it would not take very long to exhaust the best subject matters for demonstration and propaganda purposes. Take, for example, your malarial film. You can only have one. You may have lots of copies of it. My own tanning film—I can only have one.

**Q.** That is one branch of activity out of the many which you are interested in?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** I am only really trying to know why you are against Government producing their own films. It is fairly evident from the evidence that we have had that it does not pay a private producer to produce anything but entertainment films. Any other film is a drug on the market, and therefore they do not produce such films. If Government want them why should not Government produce them?

**Chairman :** It is part of the Government's function to do these things.

**Mr. Green :** Not on a commercial basis, but simply to supply you with a tanning film, the public health department with a malarial film, the agricultural department with a film on some such thing as jute, and so on?

**A.** I should first want it to be clearly established that it could be more economically done by Government.

**Q.** I agree with you entirely. It is only on the assumption that it can be economically done?

**A.** Oh, yes. But I have had a good deal of experience of Government-run shows. I came out to this country to the Ordnance factories and I know something about it; I am not talking off the book as it were.

**Q.** I entirely agree with you on the question of direct Government management.

*Colonel Crawford:* I want to push that question a little further. You said as regards a Local Government studio you thought you would not have enough work. Supposing all Local Governments combined and had a central studio upon which Local Governments could rely for their requirements, you could get over your difficulty of not having enough work probably?

**A.** Yes, but it would remove the locus of this industry to some remote place in India and contact with provincial Governments will be very small, very intangible.

**Q.** In America they have all the film producing companies collected in one place and the necessary materials are available at one place. Supposing you want a scenario writer, an actor, dress and so on in the cinema industry, you have got them all collected in one place, so that that is really one reason why it should be established in one place.

**A.** Quite.

**Q.** Then again there are persons ready to produce Indian films but who have no studio.

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** If your Government studio has spare time, that is, if its full output is not occupied by its own public utility films, it can rent out, on whatever charge it likes, the whole of its studio, equipment and personnel, to the private person who wants to produce a film, say, for a period of three weeks?

**A.** It can be done.

**Q.** Have you any particular objection to that?

**A.** I do not believe it would succeed, but that is merely my opinion.

**Q.** It is a question of helping the growth of the production of Indian films.

**A.** Yes, I think it might succeed.

**Q.** But always with that reservation that you put on, namely, that the public utility films must be produced economically and at a cheaper rate than it can be done by a private agency, and also presumably that it falls within the monies Provincial Governments have available for this work?

**A.** Yes, that is necessary.

**Q.** Can you give us any suggestions as to how we should encourage the growth of the Indian film industry?

**A.** No, I cannot. I know of no method that has been tried out successfully.

**Q.** You do not think, for instance, that the formation by Government of a central studio of this nature for the production of its own public utility films on absolutely up-to-date lines would be useful as a model to private individuals?

**A.** I do not think that anything that Government can do in that direction is not already available. It may not be here, but people who have got the enterprise, the confidence and the capital to embark on this industry are not necessarily confined to this country. They can go abroad and find the necessary facilities.

**Q.** Can you give us any information on that subject as to whether they will get any opportunities abroad to see all that should be seen?

**A.** No. If they could not get it abroad, then I quite agree that there is a case for establishing a studio.



**Q.** You agree that it is quite possible that competition from abroad will not look favourably on our endeavour to build up an Indian industry?

**A.** Yes, certainly.

**Q.** And we might therefore have obstacles put in the way of our men getting training abroad?

**A.** Yes, I know that.

**Q.** Can you give us any suggestion as to how we can make a forward move?

**A.** I cannot suggest how to expand unless there is a freer market for the film. If the exhibition of films is to be controlled by a very few closely connected concerns who look after profits mostly as the main objective, and not the development of the industry as a whole, I do not see how there can be a sufficient incentive for a large development of this industry.

**Q.** Are you suggesting that the foreign producers may have got a grip on our exhibitors here?

**A.** I think it is quite possible, an indirect grip.

**Q.** It may be hampering our attempt to build up our industry?

**A.** It restricts the possible market for Indian produced films.—yes.

**Q.** Have you any idea as to whether at any time the Indian market, the number of cinema theatres in India, will offer an adequate market for Indian produced films?

**A.** I do not know.

**Mr. Chatterman:** When you were talking about your difficulties over the demonstration train you said you could not get into touch with the central publicity officer. I take it you mean the publicity officer of the Railway Board?

**A.** We did not work through the Railway Board. We worked through the line which mainly operates in Bengal, namely, the Eastern Bengal Railway.

**Q.** Whom do you mean by the central publicity officer?

**A.** I do not think you correctly understood me. What I said was that there was considerable difficulty in co-ordinating all these departments and getting effective action at the precise moment when the publicity officer of the railway wanted to show the demonstration train. For example, at the present moment I cannot guarantee to take part in the next programme of the demonstration train for the simple reason that the very small amount of money placed at my disposal for development purposes is exhausted. The demonstration train proposition has been reviewed for this cold weather within the last two months only.

**Q.** If ever you need anybody to wake up the Railway Board Publicity Officer if you will address me I will do what I can for you. Can you tell us if the Bengal Government have actually spent any money on the preparation of propaganda films? Do you know of any department?

**A.** I understand the public health department have spent a certain amount of money on propaganda purposes, but the department of industries has not done so.

**Q.** You told us, of course, that for some time you have not been approached for a development loan by any cinema producing concern?

**A.** Yes.

**Mr. Neogy:** I will have to trouble you on the question of a central studio. I take it you are generally opposed to the idea of Government's own organisation for the production of either propaganda films or entertainment films?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** But you are prepared to consider any scheme that might be put forward under which the different Governments might pool their resources and have a central organisation in order to avoid overlapping, more or less that is to say?

A. I should think it may be a sound move.

Q. Are you quite sure that the central organisation would enable you necessarily to avoid overlapping? Because, take your own department, you are very keen on tanning research I take it. In Madras, for instance, there is a considerable tanning industry. Are you sure that your programme of the improvement of the tanning industry would meet with approval in Madras and that the Director of Industries there would give way to you in the matter of carrying on propaganda in that direction? That is to say, are you assured of an agreement between you and the Director of Industries in Madras or in any other province for the matter of that?

A. I do not apprehend any difficulty whatever. We are very accommodating people.

Q. But then it is not merely a question of setting up a studio. If you have to agree upon a standard method of research in any particular branch you have got to meet and discuss those points before you can undertake the manufacture of particular propaganda films, and that brings in the question of the constitutional difficulty. You are subordinate to a Minister responsible to the local Legislature?

A. Yes.

Q. And you have stated that since 1922 there has been no meeting of the Directors of Industries?

A. I was present at the last meeting in Simla which, I think, was in 1921 or 1922. Since then we have not been called together and I have felt we should have been called together.

Q. So the Ministers are rather jealous of their independence of authority in these matters?

A. No. They are overwhelmed with their responsibilities.

Q. When it has not been found possible up to date to arrive at a common understanding between the different provincial Governments in the matter of industrial research and industrial propaganda, how do you hope that by the same process of working, a joint studio somewhere in India, you will arrive at that understanding which must precede the filming of any particular subject?

A. Well, I can take it if this central authority or body was to expect support from us Local Government officials and departments, then it would naturally canvas our support beforehand.

Q. It would be for the central organisation to take up each question and broach it to every individual Local Government and see whether an agreement is possible to be arrived at, and then only a sort of omnibus film would be produced which would have universal currency throughout India?

A. Yes.

Q. We have been told in other places, in Bombay and the Punjab, that in order to make a successful appeal these propaganda films must have a sort of local setting about them. If you want to appeal to the *chamars* of Bengal for instance, and to show them an improved process which you want to advertise and to be carried out, it ought to be a typical Bengal *chamar*?

A. Not necessarily.

Q. Do you think the methods of the *chamar* in Bengal will appeal to the *chamar* in Madras or the methods of the *chamar* of Madras will appeal to the Bengal *chamar*. You want to have local setting, local scenes, and things of that kind which enable the man to identify that particular place as his own?

A. I do not apprehend any formidable difficulty about that.

Q. In that matter you differ from the opinions of other Local Governments?

A. I do not mind.

Q. One useful purpose which it has been suggested a central studio would have is it would be open to the private producer to engage it for the production of entertainment films. You are in touch, or at least you were in

touch, with some of these producers. Do you think the producer in Bengal would care to go down to Bombay with all his troupe, his managers and directors, scenario writers and so forth? If you have to produce a Bengal scene you will have to provide for particular kinds of things. So a Bengal producer will have to take all his staff and all his things down to Bombay or Delhi wherever the central studio may be located?

A. I have got no confidence in the possibility of the central studio for production of entertainment films of that kind. It won't be a feasible proposition.

Q. You said that you would like to have some sort of contact with provincial Governments so far as the production of your propaganda films is concerned. How would you ensure that contact to be maintained if the Government studio were located, say, either in the Punjab or in Bombay?

A. The central body would have to circulate the kind of thing that they are prepared to put in the field.

Q. In these technical and scientific matters very detailed instructions will have to be given to the producer, because he does not know anything about the tanning industry, for instance, and he has been accustomed to producing only entertainment films, and so an expert of your department may have to give him detailed instructions from day to day or even from hour to hour?

A. I should not have thought so. I should have thought that the sequence of events would have been that the central depot would have sent its apparatus down. The central studio would have its cinematograph experts and they would come down, and I would have arranged before hand a proper programme and prepared the conditions to which I would give them access, and any labour and demonstration work that they wanted would be done before they arrived. I don't think that any direct assistance from any expert from our department would be needed at all on the central bureau. We will give them written instructions and their staff will carry them out.

Q. From the figures that are before us it would seem that the producing industry ought to be a very paying one. How do you explain the fact that more capital has not been attracted to this industry?

A. I think the facilities for exhibition are so circumscribed that they do not give a fair market for the productions made by the companies here.

*Mr. Green :* Does this apply only to this town or to the whole of India?

A. I am only referring to local conditions.

*Mr. Neogy :* The particular firm you have in mind shows films made by others.

*Chairman :* They don't exhibit other peoples' films?

*Mr. Neogy :* Even to-day they are exhibiting a film made by others.

What encouragement do you think is most needed to private enterprise in this matter, and in what shape? Is it by the establishment of a Government studio?

A. No.

Q. So the Government studio would not be of much assistance to this industry?

A. Not to the private enterprise.

Q. We have been told that the overhead charges are likely to be less if you had a central organization doing the work for all the provinces. Do you agree with it?

A. I agree the overhead charges would be more spread out, but in spite of that the work would be more costly than if done by private enterprise.

Q. Supposing we were not to approve of that central studio scheme, and if Government were to give out work on a contract system to private producing companies in each province, would not that act as an encouragement to the industry without involving Government in any very large capital expenditure?

A. I certainly would prefer such an arrangement.

**Written replies of Dr. C. A. BENTLEY, Director of Public Health, Bengal, to questions 14 and 21.**

14. There is an immense demand at the present time in Bengal for films depicting public health problems, welfare work and village re-construction generally. The films most appreciated and generally most useful are those produced locally. Audiences never seem to tire of these, whereas they do not seem to understand or to be greatly interested in European and American films dealing with similar subjects. Local films, not merely Indian films, are essentially necessary, because conditions, dress, houses and customs, etc., vary so much in different parts of India. Obviously the increase use of local films would help the local film industry very materially. I attach a note on this question submitted by my Publicity Officer.

21. I am not in favour of the establishment of a State Agency and a monopoly for the purpose of producing films. It seems to me that it should be possible to ensure the production and exhibition of films conforming to moral standards by other means than this. As regards teaching and propaganda films too I fancy that in the end better results will be obtained by private enterprise, assisted and advised on occasion by those engaged in the special branches of work, *viz.* Public Health, agriculture, etc., whose progress can be advanced by propaganda) than by the production of such films directly by an official agency, central or otherwise. To give an example: Suppose I require a film illustrating the advantages of anti-cholera inoculation. I can suggest the sort of scenes that are likely to be most effective for the work I have in view, the sequences of events and the lesson intended to be driven home, better perhaps than anyone merely engaged in the work of film production. On the other hand the film producer has the technical knowledge and experience required for successful film production. In my opinion also, in order that there should be continual improvement in the technical and commercial side of film production it would be better that such production should not be confined to any sort of monopolistic enterprise.

*Appendix to Dr. C. A. Bentley's statement (Rai Sahib K. P. Ray's answers to questions 14 and 21), dated the 15th November 1927.*

Certainly it would help the growth of a film industry in India. Regarding Public Health films, it is essentially necessary that films be produced locally as conditions vary in different countries. An English film "Mother nurse your babies" or an American film "War on Mosquitos", is a very little appreciated here, as the conditions are so different. A local tinge always appeals. This department has produced two films both on Maternity and Child Welfare, which are far more preferred, than the European ones, simply because the ones produced here delineate their own ways and modes of living whereas the western films appear highly technical. There are others also on Public Health. The "Sonar Bangla" produced by the Central Co-operative Anti-Malaria Society was found highly interesting. Other provinces, *e.g.*, United Provinces are also producing their own health films.

Our departmental films were prepared, one under the direction of Mrs. Bentley by Madan & Co., and the other under the direction of the Publicity Officer attached to the Department by the "Aurora Cinema Company". The "Sonar Bangla" was also produced by the latter firm. There is a great demand for such films. In the maffasil areas thousands flock, and are keen on the subject. In fact on one occasion the illiterate agriculturists deliberately chose to see a special health film on "Malaria" rather than comic ones offered to them.

Q. 21. State agency is not indispensable; the present system has quite suited our departmental requirements. Supervision and the preparation of the scenario—plot, *etc.*, should be left with Government Departments who wish to obtain such films for propaganda purposes.

(Sd.) K. P. Ray,

15th November 1927.

**\*Oral Evidence of Dr. C. A. BENTLEY, Director of Public Health,  
Calcutta, on Monday, the 12th December 1927.**

*Chairman:* You are the Director of Public Health in this province?

A. Yes.

Q. How long have you been here?

A. Since April 1915.

Q. I suppose you appear before us in your individual capacity and not on behalf of Government?

A. It is rather difficult to say. I may say that my answers have been seen and approved. I drafted them and I showed them to the Secretary but it cannot be said whether they approved of them officially or not.

Q. We will take your written statement as expressing your personal views. We are very glad to hear that there is an immense demand for Public Utility films. I suppose that till now your Government have not embarked upon producing any films of that sort?

A. We have not produced the films ourselves. We have had some public health films produced for us practically under our direction, but we have not produced them ourselves. Two local firms produced films for us. I think one film was produced not directly for us. The late Mr. J. F. Madan produced a film on Child Welfare for my wife and made a present of it to the Lady Chelmsford Child Welfare Movement. That was made as an experiment and it was a great success. Another local company have produced a film last year for my department which is also a Child Welfare film; another local company produced a film on Malaria for the Central Co-operative Anti-Malaria Society, not a Government society, but still it is a public health film.

Q. Had your department to pay anything for it?

A. The film made by Madans has been purchased, the other one was produced entirely for the department at departmental expense.

Q. What did it cost you?

A. It cost us just under a fraction of a rupee a foot, but I am not quite certain. I believe the film produced by Madans cost them about Rs. 10,000, but they have sold reprints for a thousand rupees.

Q. What is the length of that?

A. I think it is 3,500 ft.

Q. What is the length of the film produced for your department?

A. 3,000 to 4,000 ft.

Q. Does your department own the negative?

A. The negative of the film made for our department belongs to us, while the other belongs to Madans.

Q. I suppose you believe in adult education by means of the cinema and you would like to use the cinema more and more?

A. I should like to have very many more, because these films have been more successful than anything else. I consider that they are much more effective and much cheaper than magic lantern slides.

Q. That is a point on which there is some difference of opinion. Do you believe that the film is more effective than magic lantern slides in conveying ideas to the illiterate people?

A. Yes. There is a tremendous wastage with lantern slides, and the masses are not so much impressed with them. I have a friend of mine in Assam, who is a tea planter, who has made his own films, Mr. Withers.

Q. Does anybody explain when you show the films what it is you are showing them?

A. We generally have somebody explaining the thing as the film moves, and we don't find any difficulty. If the film is properly taken in the way it

should be, it requires a minimum amount of explanation and that only for those who cannot read the captions. That has been done so far.

*Q.* You don't think that on these public health subjects the films made in other countries can be used here?

*A.* You have only got to watch the attitude of a village audience looking at one of our locally produced films and compare it when they see an American produced film on these subjects.

*Q.* In a case like that, suppose you produce films for All-India, and as the conditions differ in different provinces, you would not be able to produce a film on Malaria or Cholera suited to all parts of India?

*A.* That won't do because now the conditions in Bengal as regards malaria are totally different to those in the Punjab. The same remark applies to cholera. Then again supposing you have a film, say, in the Punjab or Bengal or Bombay, the people looking at it will not apply it to themselves, because to them the conditions are all foreign just as much as they might be to Europeans.

*Q.* So you think if money is to be spent at all in this direction you must produce local conditions?

*A.* Yes. I have seen films produced in other provinces, in fact I have been offered some on public health, and I would rather not have them, because they do not answer my purpose. That is my experience.

*Q.* Therefore you will have to produce a lot of films on public health locally?

*A.* As many as could be produced on every aspect of life. If I may give an illustration, it would be very little use to give an uneducated and unintelligent audience in Great Britain a health film dealing with people in Holland, because they would merely notice differences in customs, scenes, etc.

*Q.* I notice you are not in favour of a State agency even for producing such films?

*A.* I do not know much about the sufficiency of the technicalities of the thing, I think probably we can get more adaptability with local enterprise. The State Agency would come and tell me what to do and how a thing is to be done, according to a particular code of rules.

*Q.* On the other hand, you think that a private agency will be able to adapt themselves to your requirements?

*A.* Yes, if there is a sufficient number of them, they will do so as a matter of competition.

*Q.* Have you got suitable agencies in Bengal?

*A.* There are firms who are now doing this work, and some of them are doing better work now than before.

*Q.* Which are those firms?

*A.* I have already mentioned Madans, and there is another small company called the Aurora Cinema Co. I do not know whether Mr. Dutt has formed a company or produces films himself. I think he produced a film for the Central India Co-operative Society, but I cannot speak for certain.

*Q.* But do you think there are sufficient private agencies to undertake the work if you decided to spend more money and if you wanted to produce more propaganda films?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* On the other hand, the advantage of a Government studio would be that you can always depend upon good work within proper time and probably you will have a voice there?

*A.* Government departments have their advantages as well as disadvantages.

*Q.* You don't think it will be economical?

*A.* They could probably give you better information. In the United Provinces the Director of Public Health has his own department for producing

films, but my own idea is I would rather not undertake the direction of a film producing studio.

**Q.** The idea is to encourage the growth of the film industry in this country as a model for others interested in the industry, and after that had proved a success, to hand it over to private enterprise?

**A.** I think it is a thing on which it is difficult to express an opinion.

**Q.** Are you satisfied with the technique of the pictures, photography and all that?

**A.** I have seen a great improvement. They are producing better things now than a few years ago, and I am satisfied with the work turned out for my department. Technically the films produced in Europe are still better than those I have got produced here, but these technically more perfect films are less valuable than the ones I have.

**Q.** If there is no competition between private agencies, or if there are no private agencies, are you not likely to be charged more than it would have cost you in your own studio?

**A.** I have no personal knowledge of the cost of production. I have merely seen the prices of apparatus here and there. It seems to me that there is a better chance of getting films at a reasonable price if there are competing firms. For example, I have just been purchasing cholera vaccine for Government, and I have found three firms competing with one another with the result that Government has got the benefit.

**Q.** Now, your department will prepare films for the Agricultural Department, for the Industries Department, for the Education Department and so on. Are there sufficient private agencies in your province which can meet all this demand?

**A.** I should think there are. There was one other film produced here, and that was, I believe, for the Co-operative Credit Society. There was another produced by Shanthiniketan on Village Reconstruction. I don't know who produced these films. These are the only five films which I know have been produced on Public Health during the last 5 or 6 years in this province. There might have been ten times the number of the films produced if there was a demand for them.

**Q.** I see that in America they have produced more than 5,000 non-theatrical films, that is to say, on public health, education and so on?

**A.** That is possible. I think every one of the departments could easily get any number of films that they are likely to want produced locally without difficulty.

**Q.** Anyway, you believe that great effort should be put forth in producing films of this kind and Government money will be well spent in educating the people in this manner. And you would consider it a necessity and not merely a luxury? And you would attach greater importance to it than perhaps to primary education?

**A.** I would not like to put it quite that way, but it should go hand in hand. You could to a certain extent educate adolescents visually. Possibly, you can reach a larger number of people by means of the cinema than by the method of primary education.

**Q.** You reach now only a small percentage of the population?

**A.** Yes, but by the use of the cinema you can reach a larger number of people at a smaller cost.

**Mr. Green:** I quite understand your objection, Dr. Bentley, to a central studio if the assumption is that the studio cannot represent local idiosyncracies. We have it in evidence that the modern studio can represent any scenery that is shown to them.

**A.** But that is done by specially trained experts and actors. The sort of film that I had in view was village life as much as possible.

**Q.** I am only putting this forward to show you what a central studio would mean and the possibilities it has of reproducing anything you want to

reproduce, whether in the shape of dress, persons or habits. I am wondering, if that be granted, whether you would still maintain your objection to any possible model studio as strongly as you have?

A. Yes, it seems to me that the bigger the machine that you have got—from my point of view it is going to be the more difficult for me to control it. It is more difficult for me to get what I actually want because there is this enormous paraphernalia. I am then merely a small unit and if I say I object to this or object to that, I will probably be told: "You don't really know what you want yourself."

Q. I think any Director would leave the details of your department absolutely to you. He would only tell you: "if you put on a picture like that, it won't grip", and he will suggest to you that you might put it like that. But he would leave the public health matters to you surely.

A. It is not merely that. Unless the Director is going to be such a man, a man in a million, he is going to find it very difficult to understand what I want to get at and what the villagers want to get at.

Q. That you are going to tell him.

A. Well, he is going to be—I know when I watched my wife directing this film which was taken from here—this child welfare film.....

Q. May I just get the technical terms right? Directing means stage managing.

A. Well, she did that. Most of it was done in the village where portions of it were done by actors and that sort of thing. And before we were satisfied it had to be done again and again and again. Well, I remember realising at the time how difficult it was to get exactly what one wanted. And with these three films which have been taken, they have been so far effective, although probably a technical expert might simply brush them aside as being, from his point of view, very imperfect. Yet they have actually achieved our purpose.

Q. Granted he might not like them from the technical film aspect, might not his experience be the very thing needed to help make the film better?

A. Well, it is only, as far as one can see, the photography that might have been better, the actual photography and things of that sort, the production. And no doubt. I am not running down the technician and the film expert in the least. But what I do fear is that any attempt to officialise such a thing would make things very difficult for us. Supposing I want to get from another Government department work done in my particular line which will absolutely suit me, it is not always the easiest thing.

Q. Granted. I would suggest to you that the central studio, if it is established by private enterprise, would give you the results you want. But our evidence in Bombay shows that the producing companies were so busy producing entertainment films that they had not the time to produce Government films without charging very heavily. I mean, you have to decide between several evils, either a successful commercial firm which won't have time to do it for you, or an inferior firm which will produce inferior work, or a Government department, with the difficulties of Government departments working together as a general rule. It seems to me there are difficulties anyway.

A. Well, the only point that I am interested in is getting the sort of films I want—I don't care so long as I can get them. It is not my money. It is Government money. So long as I can get them and the more films I can get for a given expenditure and they meet my purposes, that is all that I am interested in.

Q. May I take it that you don't want any high technical excellence at the present moment?

A. At the present moment it is a wonder to our audience to see any films at all. They are not hyper-critical.

Q. I forget what you told us some films cost?

A. I think it is one rupee per foot, something like that. Not very much.



Q. Well, that is fairly cheap. You said actually "in the end," you hoped for better results from private enterprise. I am not talking now from the point of view of your department, but, if this committee, after hearing all the evidence in different parts of India, found it worth while to recommend a central studio to start with, with the idea that it should be made over to indigenous producers as soon as they are ready to take it over, would not that somewhat correspond to what you said to the Chairman, that "in the end" you hoped to get better results?

A. Well, if you had asked me the question 20 years ago, I would have been all for State enterprise. But now I am by no means all for State enterprise in things of this sort. That is a personal view.

Q. I agree with you. I am against State enterprise myself. But I am not sure you can get it in any other way.

A. I am interested in getting as many films as I can. If I can get more films of the sort I want, I would not mind in the least who produced them.

Q. It is really a question of finance?

A. Yes.

*Colonel Crawford:* Are you satisfied with what you are getting to-day?

A. Oh, I would like to get better ones—better as regards photography. I think that is an important point in a health film.

Q. Undoubtedly, there is evidence specially in regard to the negative—one knows very well that the ordinary reprint wears out. It only has a short life. But better photography is undoubtedly desirable.

*Chairman:* Better acting also.

*Colonel Crawford:* Of course, there is nothing that ties the studio to a particular place. Your camera man can move all over India. So he can go and take your village communities or anything else. Did you meet the Social Hygiene Delegation when they were out here?

A. Yes.

Q. Have you read their report? Look at the first paragraph. Do you agree with that opinion, about the evil influence of the cinema being cited everywhere?

A. Well, no, I certainly would not express a definite opinion on it, because I simply have not got the evidence to express an opinion like that.

Q. You have nothing to support an opinion like that in your experience?

A. No.

*Mr. Neogy:* You said that you have experience of films which were produced under your direction or that of officers of your department?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you think that it would do for you to give those instructions in writing instead of deputing an officer to direct a producer on the spot?

A. It would never do.

Q. And if your pictures are to be taken in a central studio—which may be in Bombay or Delhi or the Punjab—you will have to depute an officer to give these detailed instructions?

A. I would have either to go myself or send one of my trusted officers.

Q. I am just trying to see the difficulties in the way. And then you must reproduce Bengal sceneries in order to make any effective appeal to the people of Bengal?

A. Yes.

Q. Now, what proportion of the pictures do you think should be taken in the open air and from actual life?

A. The majority of our problems at the present time affect the villages and the largest proportion of the population live in the villages and they live largely in the open air.

*Q.* And you would rather have those pictures taken from actual life and not seek to reproduce actual life in a distant part of India with the help of artificial sceneries and artificial surroundings?

*A.* No. I would prefer to take village conditions. There is no doubt they could be imitated in a theatre or in a studio for this purpose, but it seems to me that when there are so many places which will serve a purpose naturally, where the particular lesson one wants to teach can easily be seen, that would be the better background.

*Mr. Green:* May I interpose one question? Some of your scenes would be interiors?

*A.* Probably they would be.

*Q.* May I point out that you cannot take those interiors except in studios?

*Mr. Neogy:* What would be the proportion of interiors?

*A.* It would be very difficult to say.

*Q.* Supposing you were asked how many films you would like to have on public health.

*A.* Well, I would then sit down and think about it. At the present time we have only with the greatest difficulty had funds for producing, say, one film in the course of three years. Well, that does not give us any data.

*Q.* Well, confining ourselves to that particular film, what proportion roughly do the open air scenes constitute as compared with the indoor scenes?

*A.* I don't think I could answer that without looking through our films again. Almost the whole of the malaria film, which was not produced for me, almost the whole of that is open air. Almost the whole of the village reconstruction film which was produced for Santi Niketan, was open air. Almost the whole of the film that was produced by the Co-operative Credit Department is open air. A very large proportion—more than one-half—of the child welfare films produced by our department are open air.

*Q.* Now supposing you had to produce that film with the help of this contemplated central studio, you would have to reproduce those Bengal scenes artificially in the studio, I mean the outdoor scenes?

*A.* Yes, unless you altered your whole scenery.

*Q.* And then again, take the indoor scenes. Of course, they could be taken at Delhi, or anywhere else. Now, for that you would require your men, those who are going to take part in those scenes, to be taken from Bengal, to that particular place where your studio would be situated and then you would have to accompany them, or send a very responsible subordinate? That is your position? And that would be very difficult?

*A.* Yes, I suppose I have not sufficient experience of film production on a large scale.

*Q.* Now, supposing the quality of such a film taken in the central studio is superior to the quality of the film that you can locally produce here, would that be a very great inducement for you to resort to a distant studio? It would certainly be better if you got better quality, but don't you think the quality which you are getting at present suffices for your present needs?

*A.* Well, so far, they have been successful. The films have been exceedingly popular. So popular that I cannot meet the demand for them.

*Q.* You can judge of the quality, for all practical purposes, from the popularity of the film. You would not lay any great emphasis on improvement of quality, if that entails all these difficulties. Have I interpreted you correctly?

*A.* Yes, that is so.

*Q.* Now it has been suggested that it would ensure prompt delivery of films if you entrusted the work to a Government concern. The central studio which has been suggested will not be under the Government of Bengal. All the provincial Governments will control it or it will be under the control of

the Government of India. Are you sure that in the competing claims of the various provinces you will always get the best attention and prompt delivery?

A. If we are to judge by results in the past, if Bengal is only to get the share of the central cinema laboratory that she has got of other things, I am afraid she would come off badly.

Q. Now as regards the adequacy of the producing machinery, I take it that if Government were to adopt a definite programme of film publicity, then there is no reason to suppose that sufficient response will not be forthcoming from the private producer.

A. I think so.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* Can you kindly give me the amount sanctioned in your budget for producing films during the last three years?

A. It has not averaged in the last few years more than a thousand rupees a year.

Q. And this year?

A. This year we got Rs. 3,000. We have put proposals up for increased expenditure in the ensuing budget; we have asked for a sum of Rs. 15,000, but whether we shall get it or not I am at all sure.

Q. Has the Rs. 3,000 been spent?

A. Yes.

Q. On what film?

A. On child welfare.

Q. There is a good deal of cholera here?

A. Yes.

Q. Is there any film on cholera?

A. We have no film on cholera.

Q. If there were a film, it would be very useful at the present time?

A. It would. I have actually got a film with me, written up, the story and everything.

Q. It has not yet been done.

A. No, because I have no funds for that purpose.

Q. Your neighbouring province the United Provinces, has got a film "Why die of Cholera"—wouldn't you send for it here and utilise it?

A. Unfortunately that film is not by any means altogether suitable. For example, we have been utilising, more than anything else, cholera inoculation, and that film hardly touches upon that but emphasises more the treatment of cholera than the prevention. Besides that, the scenes are so different that they are not in many ways suitable for teaching the lesson that we want. If the film had been wholly suitable I should have asked Government specially to let me purchase a copy because we were offered one for a thousand rupees. But strictly speaking, I think the film for a thousand rupees for us would be dear at the price, although it is an excellent and a very cheap film for the United Provinces.

Q. Wouldn't you follow the precept, something is better than nothing?

A. Well, in this case had the same film been produced in Bengal, it would have been useful.

Q. It is very useful in the United Provinces.

A. I can quite understand that it was; that it is. Because it depicts scenes which the people in the United Provinces can grasp at once. But the point is that they depict scenes in the United Provinces and instead of teaching the lesson that we want to inculcate, our people are interested in noticing the differences in dress and scenery. The lesson is lost, I think. They don't notice what we want to teach because they are looking at things which are quite strange for them.

Q. Did you ask for any special grant for what you have written down on cholera? Did you apply to Government?

A. Well, our budget is limited.

Q. Did you ask for any special grant? Is your Rs. 3,000 over?

A. That was spent at the beginning of the financial year. I have been asking for years for an increased grant for publicity, including money for things like a cholera film.

*Chairman*: Does not the press help you in creating public opinion?

A. Well, I can hardly go to the press and agitate for this.

*Colonel Crawford*: Can I take it that the film would be the best method of spreading popularity for inoculation for cholera and inoculation generally?

A. Probably a properly taken film with the story working up to inoculation can do that.

Q. Can I take it that that would be the most effective method of spreading it?

A. I think very likely it would. I think for publicity it is very useful. I should very much like to see a suitable film. But if I may use that point, our chief difficulty as regards propaganda for cholera is in the towns. We can get it down to the villages very easily, but not to the towns. Now, the films that would be suitable for villages will not be suitable for towns and *vice versa*. We find, for example, that the people in Calcutta in regard to this very question of cholera and cholera inoculation are very lethargic and very difficult to manage, whereas the villagers are relatively an easier lot. But the films that will appeal to the towns will not appeal to the villages.

*Mr. Green*: Wouldn't that be an excellent opportunity for the central studio to come in?

A. Well, the central studio could give us a film that would be used in towns.

Q. Or in an emergency you could apply for a Government grant.

*Mr. Neogy*: There are towns where the conditions are similar to the conditions in the villages, for instance there are mofussil towns, in which your village pictures would be very useful.

A. Well, yes, in the mofussil generally.

Q. You are thinking of the bigger towns?

A. Yes.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer*: Have you produced three films on public health?

A. We have produced two and I have known of several others.

Q. Have they got any titles in the vernacular?

A. Oh, yes. One has had titles in the vernacular.

Q. In Bengali?

A. Yes.

Q. Were they very much appreciated?

A. Oh, yes. For the first film we had, called "The Cry of the Children," I have so many requests now that I simply cannot meet them.

Q. Because they have got these vernacular captions. Whatever films you will now produce will have the same titles also?

A. Yes.

Q. Vernacular captions are very essential in these films?

A. Oh, yes, they must be.

### **Oral Evidence of the Members of the Bengal Board of Film Censors, on Tuesday, the 13th December 1927.**

The following members of the Board were present:—

1. Sir Charles Tegart. (*President*.)
2. Mr. K. Ahmad.

3. Mr. D. J. Cohen.
4. Mrs. S. A. Stanley.
5. Mr. J. S. Henderson.
6. Mr. G. Murray Webb.
7. Mr. F. D. Bartley. (*Secretary.*)

*Chairman:* I understand, Sir Charles, your Board consists of 7 members and yourself as the President?

A. Yes.

Q. Have your Board considered our questionnaire at any of its meetings?

A. Yes.

Q. Have you framed your answers to our questionnaire at all?

A. Yes. That is on the second part, "Social aspects and control".

Q. I do not think we have been favoured with a copy of your minutes, if any.

A. We were not asked for it.

Q. I suppose you will speak on behalf of the Board on the questions which we put to you. If any member holds a dissenting view, he may intimate it to us at once so that we may proceed. Your usual procedure on receiving an application for a certificate is for the Inspector to view the film in the first instance?

A. That is so.

Q. You have got two Inspectors. How do you divide the work between them?

A. We have got an Inspector and an Assistant Inspector, but the censoring of all important pictures other than topical pictures is done by the Inspector.

Q. Does he work every day in the week?

A. It practically amounts to work every day in the week.

Q. I take it it must take him about two hours a day?

A. I should think so. We have between 700 to 800 films examined here every year.

Q. Last year it was 679, and about 2,276,000 feet of films were examined in the last official year. I suppose it takes about an hour to examine 4,000 feet of film?

A. Yes, roughly. A film of 8,000 feet takes about two hours, and possibly longer if parts have to be repeated.

Q. And he makes notes on the film?

A. Yes.

Q. And the Secretary sees those notes?

A. He puts it up to the Secretary.

Q. The Secretary does not usually see the film?

A. No, not necessarily.

Q. He goes on the notes made by the Inspector?

A. Yes.

Q. And the Secretary puts up a note whether it is satisfactory or whether there is any objection?

A. If the Inspector reports that there is no objection at all to the film, then the Secretary orders a provisional certificate to issue. Then one member of the Board, as I told you yesterday, is asked to go and see the picture at the theatre itself.

Q. That means at the public show?

A. Yes. If the Inspector finds objectionable parts in the film, that is considered and if necessary a sub-committee is appointed to view the film.

Q. Who finds it necessary?

A. If the Inspector's report is unfavourable either in parts or wholly, then the matter is put up for the appointment of a sub-committee and the sub-committee views the film and reports to the full Board.

Q. I suppose it is invariably so?

A. Yes. Of course, if it is merely a question of some of the letter press in the film being objectionable, that could be cut out on the spot.

Q. I suppose probably the Inspector or the Secretary comes to an understanding with the exhibitor on those parts which are objected to?

A. Yes, to cut out. If it is simply one part which is clearly objectionable and the rest of the film is free from objection, then the order to the producer is to cut out that part.

Q. Before the Secretary issues his provisional certificate, are parts cut out?

A. Yes, if necessary.

Q. That is, on the Inspector's notes?

A. Yes.

Q. Without any member seeing the film for himself?

A. Provided the cutting of that particular part renders the film unobjectionable.

Q. And if the Inspector's report raises objections, are those cases invariably reported to the sub-committee or are some cases dealt with by the Secretary?

A. No. Each case is dealt with on its merits according to the nature of the Inspector's comments.

Q. By whom?

A. By the Secretary in consultation, if necessary, with the President.

Q. The Secretary in the first instance where he feels a doubt, consults the President whether a sub-committee is to be appointed or not?

A. Yes. The sub-committee usually consists of two members.

Q. I suppose the President chooses the sub-committee?

A. The Secretary generally chooses them.

Q. Does it go by rotation?

A. Generally by rotation, but there again each film is considered on its merits and according to the nature of the film the sub-committee is selected.

Q. Can you tell us exactly how the Secretary decides such a point as to who should be chosen?

A. For instance, if the film is such as is likely to be objected to as being offensive to Muhammadans he would naturally put the Muhammadan member to report on it. If it is a film which is likely to be objected to from the point of view of the military, he would put the military representative on it. In the case of a film which is likely to affect women or children the lady representative would be on it.

Q. In that way he makes the choice. Can you send us a list of the sub-committees you had for the last year?

A. Yes, we can.

Q. Does the sub-committee pass final orders or does it report to the full Board?

A. They report to the full Board.

Q. Every case that comes to the sub-committee goes to the full Board whether the sub-committee agrees with the Inspector or not?

A. Yes. Every case in which a sub-committee has been appointed is considered by the full Board, and also every film examined comes up before the full Board. The Inspector's report goes before the full Board.

Q. After the provisional certificate?

A. Yes, for confirmation by the Board.

**Q.** How do you decide these things? Merely on the notes of the Inspector?

**A.** Yes, the comments of the Inspector are read out to the Board.

**Q.** How do you decide it? Without viewing the film?

**A.** If we consider it necessary to view the film we view it. But the Inspector's report generally gives a pretty good idea of the nature of the picture.

**Mr. Ahmad:** Very often it happens after the provisional certificate has been granted one or two members see the picture.

**Chairman:** Yes, Sir Charles Tegart told us that they go and view at the public show. Have the public at any time, either the press or the public at any time, complained to the Board about either the adequacy of the censorship or about too strict censorship?

**A.** There have been comments. I think the Calcutta Vigilance Association once addressed us. I remember a letter from the Vigilance Association. It was some time ago.

**Mrs. Stanley:** That was before I came on.

**Sir Charles Tegart:** We have not, so far as I remember, had any reference recently. I do not know if any members of the Board have had complaints in which the censorship has been criticised either by public bodies or by the press.

**Q.** When the Board meets to decide on the Inspector's objections do you give the exhibitor an opportunity of presenting his point of view to the Board?

**A.** At every Board meeting we allow a representative of the trade to come up. He is not present at the actual meeting of the Board, but after the Board has met and finished its meeting, the representative of the trade can come in and place any matter he wishes before the Board. The representative that appears is selected by the trade.

**Q.** The person interested in that film ought to be.....

**A.** If any person connected with the Trade and interested in a particular film wants to put his views before the Board he can do so after any Board meeting.

**Q.** Supposing you are going to decide the objections made by the Inspector to a particular film, does the exhibitor get notice of your meeting to do that?

**A.** The trade are notified of our meetings.

**Q.** When you say the trade you mean the film trade?

**A.** Yes, that is, the proprietors of the cinema houses.

**Q.** So that they have an opportunity of representing their case?

**A.** Yes. They also have an opportunity when the Inspector is viewing the film or when the sub-committee is viewing the film.

**Q.** Do you generally accept the certificate given by the British Board of Censors?

**A.** No. We censor pictures from our own point of view.

**Q.** Even if it is not a question bearing upon any local conditions? Supposing your objection is to the general moral tone of a picture?

**A.** We do not accept necessarily the certificate of the British Board on the question of moral tone.

**Q.** Even in matters which are not pertinent to local conditions, such as communal questions and things of that sort?

**A.** In any way.

**Q.** I suppose you are aware of the rules which guide the British Board of Censors, which they have laid down for their own guidance?

**A.** Yes, I have seen their annual reports.

**Q.** Do they in any way differ from the rules which you have for your own guidance?

A. No.

Q. They are more or less the same?

A. Yes. The general principles that guide the British Board are more or less the same as ours.

Q. I suppose you have adopted more or less the Bombay rules in your instructions to Inspectors?

Mr. Green: The Bombay Board have got rather more detailed instructions.

Sir Charles Tegart: I saw the Bombay Board's. They seem to be much fuller and more complete.

Chairman: In fact, it appeared to me that they have taken very largely from the British Board's rules which guide the British Board of Censors. Now, in a case like that, where on a general question of tone of morality—of course, you also differ sometimes from other provincial Boards in the country itself?

A. Yes.

Q. What is in your opinion the proper procedure in such a case? Do you think it is advisable to have this conflict on a general question? I can understand local conditions, but on a question of moral tone, do you think there should be room for difference between the various provinces in the first place and then between the British standard and the Indian standard?

A. I think it inevitable.

Q. Could you not get over it by having a central board to deal with it?

A. A central board would, of course, decide once and for all by a fiat what was or what was not to be shown, but it would not remove local objections.

Q. Local objections based on local conditions would be safeguarded by special powers—power to suspend and veto.

A. As far as my experience goes there is a difference of opinion between our Board and the Bombay Board on questions of morality and general tone.

Q. I see you have differed in about four cases in the last 4 or 5 years on the question of general tone of morality.

A. I should think more.

Mr. Green: There were also certain cases which dealt with communal questions and political questions. I take it the suggestion is that the Bombay Board is not as rigid on the question of moral tone as the Bengal Board?

Chairman: Similarly the same thing may happen in other places also, say, there would be a different code of morality for Madras and Burma. Do you think it is conducive to the welfare of the trade that there should be such difference of opinion between the various provinces on the general rules of morality?

A. No, but I think these differences could be got over by a less drastic method than abolishing the Boards.

Q. It is not suggested that they should be abolished. The local Boards will be necessary to deal with local products; the Indian films which are produced now and which we hope will be produced in larger numbers, will have to be dealt with by the local Boards. But on general questions where Boards want to differ on general grounds of morality—morality is common all over the world for all human beings, whether they be in the east or the west?

A. But standards of morality differ materially.

Q. That is a question which leads me on to another point. You mean standards of etiquette vary or standards of morality vary? I do not think there is any difference between the east and the west as to chastity, as to nudity, as to truth, or virtue triumphing over vice. Surely there may be difference in social etiquette, but as regards standards of morality do you think there is really any difference?

A. Between one country and another?

Q. Yes, standards of morality.



A. I should say there was.

Q. I do not know. I would rather put it down for etiquette. The standard of morality being the same we observe it differently. That is all. Any way, my point was this. It is a great handicap to the trade and the industry, specially if the Indian industry is to progress. Recently instances have happened. I am more concerned with that than with western films. Unless the objection is raised on certain local grounds peculiar to the province, on general grounds it is highly detrimental to the growth of the industry if you have different standards.

A. I say it would affect the industry.

Q. Don't you agree in such a case the certificate of a central board with power always reserved to suspend, that is, emergency power to suspend for local conditions being maintained,—such a certificate should have currency throughout India?

A. What would the composition of the central board be?

Q. I suppose you may have provincial representatives on that board, whether it be Calcutta, Bombay, or anywhere else?

A. Whole-time censors?

Q. Not necessarily whole-time. It may be people who are in the province itself. In Calcutta, for instance, you have got representatives from all over the country. If you want a Pathan you can get him here, if you want a Marwari you can have him here, if you want a Madrassi you can get him here.

A. The suggestion put forward by the Bengal Board was that the existing Boards at Bombay, Calcutta and Rangoon, should continue and that what was needed was a central appellate authority. Where Boards differ, reference should be to a central appellate authority.

Q. That is another alternative suggestion. If a local Board wants to differ from another Board on general grounds, then that should be referred to a central authority to decide the matter?

A. That is the suggestion that the Bengal Board wish to put before you.

Q. That comes to the same thing. Instead of calling it a central board the provincial board's certificate will have currency throughout the country as it is now unless a local board disagrees, in which case the central authority should decide?

A. That was our suggestion.

Q. That will perhaps conduce to harmonious working between the various boards?

A. Yes.

Mr. Cohen: The Board has also decided that that central appellate authority should consist of one member from each of the three boards.

Q. Who are already on the local boards you mean?

Mr. Cohen: Yes, the object being that there will be more co-operation in the working of the three boards.

Q. Don't you think it will lead to a conflict which you want to avoid? Supposing Bombay takes one view, Bengal takes a different view.....

Sir Charles Teggart: Our Board considered that there should be three boards, Calcutta, Bombay and Rangoon, and in case of conflict of opinion the view of the majority should prevail. At present we never meet the Bombay Board and never meet any representative of that Board. We never have any opportunity of talking over the matter and we have felt all along that personal contact between the two boards would go a long way towards smoothing over the difficulties which have arisen. Therefore, if in appointing a central appellate authority to decide questions of differences, the central authority was constituted from one member from each of the three boards, there would be personal contact between the members of the boards that differ with an umpire.....

*Q.* You do not want to confine it to members of the local boards, but to have additional members? You will have a representative from each province of the provincial board with two or three additional members so that an independent mind might be brought to bear on the question?

*A.* Our view is that censoring is a difficult problem, that experience is essential. It is difficult for an outsider to come and examine a picture and say whether it is objectionable or not. Since, when a board has adopted a standard, the picture has got to be examined in the light of that standard both with reference to the pictures in the past and in the future. Therefore we did not suggest that outsiders should be appointed to the central board. We thought that 3 representatives would be sufficient.

*Q.* You believe that each will be able to convince the other or come to a compromise?

*A.* If they cannot come to a compromise there is always a member from the third board who is independent and he can decide the matter.

*Q.* That is a matter of detail as to the composition of the central board. But you agree that such cases should come before a central board?

*A.* That is the opinion of our board.

*Mr. Green:* May I ask where this appellate board will meet? It will have to be convened periodically?

*A.* We considered, from the geographical position, Calcutta was the place for it to meet as being half-way between the two. But we did not stress that point and if it was necessary to meet in Bombay or Rangoon it could be arranged.

*Chairman:* As regards the standard which you observe do you think it is a practicable proposition to lay down a standard which will be applicable to all parts of the province?

*A.* You may adopt but how can you actually lay down a standard?

*Q.* Either you will have to go down to the lowest level or go up to the highest level. Conditions vary in the city of Calcutta from those in remote towns in the districts?

*A.* You mean, what will be good for Calcutta may be bad for the district?

*Q.* Just as they say, what is good for London may not be good for Calcutta. We have often heard of this, what is good for England may not be good for India. Similarly what is good for Calcutta may not be good for a remote town in Bengal?

*A.* That is conceivable.

*Q.* Is it possible for the censorship board to lay down any practical means for its own guidance in such a matter?

*A.* To guide the local authorities?

*Q.* I do not mean that. I mean the board which censors in each province.

*A.* You can lay down rules but the question is how to apply them.

*Q.* It should not be left to the Censoring Board, but it should be left to the local authorities to deal with them under the emergency powers as it is now?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Otherwise you will be lowering the films to their lowest standard if a Censoring Board were to take into account the varying conditions of civilization or knowledge or capacity of the population in various parts of the country. I mean, if you take all those things into account, you will have to be very strict and cut out almost everything?

*A.* I don't think that in practice that has proved to be so.

*Q.* But do you adopt in your Censor Board the standard which will be applicable to a village?

*A.* It has not been found necessary to take that standard. Only smaller films go to a village.

*Q.* There is a complaint made by the press and by others as well that the film as it is shown here is creating all sorts of wrong notions about the west and the illiterate masses are misguided by the films which are exhibited here. They say also that the population is entirely rural in India and they are carried away by false notions. If you are to give weight to that objection, do you think the Censor Board can lay down practical rules for guidance?

*A.* I don't think myself—I am not for the moment speaking for the Board—I don't think that we should base our procedure on the standard of the lowest type of intelligence.

(At this stage Mr. Rama Prasad Mukherjee, the representative of the Corporation on the Censor Board, came and took his seat.)  
I mean, I would not suggest that we should be guided by the lowest standard.

*Q.* One of the objects of the films is to educate the people about the conditions in other countries?

*A.* If that is so, it fails in its objective. The objective of the films that we see here is to make money for the producers and the exhibitors.

*Q.* I was just looking over your films censored in your province, and I find that out of 16 films which you rejected on moral grounds, 7 came from Britain.

*Colonel Crawford:* Does that show the country of export or the country in which it is produced?

*A.* The films shown there show the country in which they were produced. They were British films produced in Great Britain.

*Chairman:* Out of the numerous films coming from America and passing through censorship I find only 4 were rejected?

*A.* Where the country of origin shows Britain, it means that the film was produced in Britain.

*Q.* Out of these 16 films which were rejected, 7 came from Great Britain, two from Germany, three from India and only 4 from America, though America sends out about 90 per cent. of the films to this country?

*A.* I cannot say offhand if America sends out as high a percentage as all that, because we are now getting British films too.

*Mr. Henderson:* Most of them were banned on moral grounds.

*Sir Charles Tegart:* These were banned last year.

*Chairman:* Please see the list and see your endorsement against 8413 and 8414; also see your endorsement against 8323.

*A.* All these are recent.

*Chairman:* I was referring to these with a view to see whether the complaints in the press about the Hollywood standard really bear scrutiny.

*Mr. Henderson:* It is somewhat unfortunate that four of these films were produced in Britain.

*Sir Charles Tegart:* They were all short pictures, only a thousand feet long. They perhaps convey an exaggerated idea of the total number of rejections.

*Chairman:* We have to be careful about the western films, whether they come from Britain or from America. Now, if you are to adopt the Indian outlook in these matters, don't you think the presence of a larger number of Indians on your Board is essential?

*A.* I answered that question yesterday, and I said that a large Board is unwieldy; the smaller you keep the Board, compatible with the various interests concerned, the more likely you will be to get a definite standard fixed and adhered to.

*Q.* I see the force of it, but the point is this. You will agree that in this country the majority of the audiences are Indians, and the Censor Board decides things for them. But in so doing we must adopt our own censorship, is it not? Surely, the Indian audience cannot accept your views, however eminent your position may be, as to what is suitable for them and what is not?

A. If any section of the people are not satisfied with the work of the Board, they have got ample opportunity to put their complaints before the Board, and from the fact that we have so far received no complaints from the public bodies, we, on the whole, are entitled to assume that the work of the Board has been approved generally.

Q. Most of the work is done by the Inspector or the Secretary, and they only make small notes?

A. The Board or at least some members of the Board see every picture produced here. In addition to the actual requests from the Secretary to various members to see the pictures, it is open to any member of the Board to see any picture at any time, and to put his views before the Board.

Q. Then you don't agree with the view that from that point of view it is more desirable to have more Indians on the Board?

A. I don't think so, because any member can put before the Board the Indian point of view. It is essential on the Board to have all interests represented, and I think myself they are all adequately represented.

*Mrs. Stanley:* I am elected by the Calcutta Vigilance Association which has a very large majority of Indians, and I have been elected continuously for the last four years. I am in very close touch with them and they are always able to put their views before the Board through me.

Q. Are all the remarks, when the films are excised, considered by the whole Board?

A. All excisions are put before the whole Board.

Q. All the excisions which are shown there, I take it, are approved by the full Board and then considered at the meeting.

*Mr. Mukherjee:* I may explain it in this way, Sir. The film is first examined by the Inspector, and when his report comes before the full Board, the members of the Board, not having seen the picture, are not in a position to understand what are the reasons for the criticism advanced by the Inspector. Though these matters are formally placed before the full Board, the Board cannot take an independent view of all those details except in cases where a general question is raised by the Inspector.

Q. Did you raise this point in your Board at all at any time?

A. I have been here only during the last three months.

Q. That is a matter more for internal economy than for us to consider?

A. I put it to Sir Charles and he said that they merely decided on the notes of the Inspector.

Q. I see you err on the side of caution from some notes which you made in one film. Please see the endorsement against 8139. ("A Royal Romance" or "The Man from Brodneys"). Which particular portion, did you want them to omit, do you mean the word "white"?

*Sir Charles Tegart:* That, I think I am correct in saying, was cut out in order to avoid giving offence to the Anglo-Indian as there was a distinction drawn in that picture between what we call half-castes and pure white, and we tried to cut it out in the letter press.

Q. I do not know whether the purport of the story will be clear if those portions are cut out?

A. If the exhibitors agree to the cutting out, you can always take it that the story is not in any way mutilated.

Q. Take 8172. "Yolanda," and you say in your endorsement "Omit the scene showing the man hanging from tree and a bird pecking his head." You further say "Omit the sub-title 'To us of Royalty can anything be sweeter than the smell of a dead traitor'." What is wrong with it?

A. That is a matter of opinion, we would not like it applied to our own Royal Family.

*Mr. Green:* I take it that you omitted it with the concurrence of the exhibitors?

A. It was a suggestion, the same idea could be conveyed in language which was not objectionable.

*Chairman:* Again look at No. 8070 "Impossible Mrs. Bellew". In your remarks you say 'Omit the sub-title "Madame you are magnificent, your figure is fair as your face beautiful".' What is wrong with it?

A. It was a direct reference to some essential features of the lady.

Q. Don't you pay compliments to a lady?

A. I think it was somewhat an offensive remark to make.

Q. Sometimes they are flattered too. For instance, our Kalidasa has put in some such words to Dushyanta in addressing Shakuntala?

A. But I would not draw an exact parallel between a book and a picture on the screen. You would agree that a picture shown on the screen is much more striking and will appeal to a much wider audience than it can possibly do in the case of a book.

Q. Now, as regards emergency powers, do you know whether the power of suspending films by the District Magistrate has been much availed of in your province?

A. I cannot recollect a case. We have had no such case.

Q. That shows that the censorship is adequate?

A. It shows that it has been accepted throughout the province by local authorities.

Q. Do you think there is any disinclination on the part of the trade to raise objections to the recommendations made by the Inspector or do they want to compromise the matter by saying 'let us get on'. Is that the attitude they adopt?

A. The trade accept the recommendations of the Inspector and they pull on well together. In certain cases the trade has represented that the cuts proposed would seriously affect the continuity of the story and they have put forward alternative proposals which have been considered by the Board, but those are a very small percentage of cases. So far as the Board is aware, there has been no dissatisfaction on the part of the trade in regard to the cuts made by the Board.

Q. Supposing it were made a condition that each film should be seen by two or three or more members of the Board working by rotation or by panels. Do you think it will be difficult to find suitable men to do the work in the city of Calcutta?

A. Would this abolish the Inspector?

Q. Not necessarily.

A. Do you mean that after the Inspector had inspected the film it should be viewed by two or more members of the Board?

Q. Yes, they should not merely decide the matter on the notes of the Inspector, but they should examine it themselves?

A. Here I shall speak for myself. First of all, I don't see any necessity for it as our standard of censorship here is generally approved and there have been no recent complaints against it so far. Secondly, it would be very costly as you would have to pay these members for each sub-committee, and thirdly, each member of the Board has the chance to see the picture after it has been certified and put on, so that the members have every opportunity at the first appearance of the picture to go and see it as members of the Board and then submit their views on it to the Board. To have a double censorship of each and every film once it has been examined by the Inspector would be obviously unnecessary.

*Mr. Green:* Would it be necessary for an Inspector to examine at all in such a case?

A. That is why I asked the question whether you would abolish the Inspector and the Chairman said "No."

*Chairman:* The Inspector will be there to assist the Board when they examine the film together.

*A.* At least that is the view I hold.

*Q.* Have other members of the Board got other views on that subject?

*Mr. Henderson:* We don't view one picture all together.

*Mr. Green:* May I give you some figures? According to your returns, you examined 2½ million feet of film last year which works out to 11 hours a week. If two members examined each film and put in two hours work a week, you would need 11 members to do the work.

*Mr. Henderson:* I don't think it is practicable.

*Chairman:* When you say it is not practicable, have you got a system of Honorary Magistrates for your city?

*Sir Charles Tegart:* Yes.

*Q.* How many are there?

*A.* Forty. One of our Honorary Magistrates is sitting just behind us.

*Q.* I suppose that class of men will be quite suitable for this kind of work?

*A.* I should not say that there is any connection at all between the selection of Honorary Magistrates and men for the Censoring Board. It seems to me that the duties are fundamentally different.

*Mr. Henderson:* They must be experienced officers in the first place.

*Chairman:* If these men are taken, it will mean some help to the existing Board, will it not?

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* Will you not be transferring the discretion given to a Board to an individual in this way?

*Sir Charles Tegart:* I don't think you have appreciated what I said just now. I said that every member of the Board sees every picture, and every member of the Board has got a right to see any picture at any time. It does not transfer any responsibility when he is definitely requested by the Secretary to examine the film. Short of the Board always going about in a body, I don't see how you can get out of that difficulty. But from the fact that no objection has been raised, either by the public or by the press, it will be obvious that the Board is working well.

*Q.* Well, there is a lot of complaint that the films allowed in this country have a lot of undesirable scenes. One of the main reasons why this committee was appointed was that such films are allowed to be exhibited in this country. Allegations are made. Why do you say there are no complaints?

*A.* Well, we are only talking about our own pictures in our own province.

*Q.* So you are satisfied from the conditions in your province, as responsible members of the board you are satisfied that there is really no legitimate need for stricter censorship?

*A.* No, there are certain difficulties which can be got over.

*Q.* So far, then, your advice to me would be that the investigations of these allegations need not be seriously pursued.

*A.* Oh, I would not dare to put such a suggestion before you. You may get opinions which have not been expressed to us.

*Q.* But so far as your province is concerned?

*A.* We can only say that no adverse views have been put before us either by public bodies or by individuals or by members.

*Q.* You know the delegation which visited India at the beginning of this year, the Social Hygiene Delegation?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Have you seen their condemnation?—page 34.

*Mr. Green:* Did that Délégation consult with your body at all?

*A.* I saw Mrs. Neville Rolfe on more than one occasion and I think I am correct in saying that she never mentioned the cinema to me.

*Chairman:* We were told the same thing in Bombay.

4. She never mentioned it. I saw her on various occasions, both in my house and in office.

*Q.* And she knew you were the President of the Board of Censors.

*A.* Well, it is widely known here. If she was going to criticise the cinema, she could have asked what form of censorship there was in Calcutta. I don't know whether she spoke to any other member of the Board.

*Mrs. Stanley:* She did speak to me about it because she knew me well, but I had no idea she was going to report it and she asked no questions about it. She knew that I was a member and she never discussed it with me.

*Q.* Here she says: "In every province the evil influence of the cinema was cited by educationists and representative citizens as one of the major factors in lowering the standard of sex conduct and thereby tending to increase the dissemination of disease." Do you agree with that view at all?

*Mr. Ahmad:* It is put too strongly. I should say novels do greater harm than the cinema.

*Chairman:* "While in India the Delegation found that films which owing to their generally suggestive nature had been rejected by large cities in the west were in circulation in India and Burma."

*Sir Charles Tegart:* On the contrary, as you will see from our list, pictures that carry a universal certificate from the British Board of Censors have been banned and cut here.

*Chairman:* I see. Then she says, "The publicity material, handbills and posters, used in connection with films are in many cases more indecent and suggestive than the films."

*Mrs. Stanley:* That, I think, is so.

*Q.* In many cases?

*Mr. Murray-Webb:* In a good few cases.

*Q.* Can you give us any instances of such?

*A.* I could give you one. There was one not very long ago depicting a very scantily clad chorus girl dancing on a dining table with men looking on, and that was decidedly objectionable.

*Q.* Was it true to the film?

*A.* As a matter of fact, the film itself was not nearly so suggestive as the poster.

*Q.* There was nothing you could see on the film which would justify it? That is the one case you remember?

*A.* Oh no, there are others. I also remember one very objectionable poster of a film . . . and there you see a wholly naked girl against the moon.

*Mrs. Stanley:* There was a recent handbill which my Association I think attached to a representation they have submitted. I think it relates to a picture called "Dance Madness," and many Indian youths were heard making very objectionable comments. It was obviously treated as thoroughly indecent.

*Q.* That is the handbill. So that I suppose it is your general opinion that this publicity material also should be brought under censorship?

*Sir Charles Tegart:* Yes, we are all agreed on that point. That is the opinion of the board.

*Q.* And you mean that along with the film they should send you the publicity material connected with it? Have you ascertained from the trade whether it is practicable?

*Mr. Murray-Webb:* The posters and handbills generally come out with the picture or ahead of the picture. They are, I think, in most cases prepared by the producers of the film.

*Q.* So that you don't think any inconvenience will be caused to the trade by insisting upon these things being censored?

A. I cannot say.

*Mr. Bartley:* Well, the only thing is that I understand from the managers that apparently along with the films they buy ordinary posters and descriptive literature and if they are denied the use of these things there is a certain loss.

*Q.* Well, the loss is one thing. But how would it be inconvenient to them if this advertisement matter is censored beforehand?

*Mr. Green:* I quite see it would be quite practicable for the Board to object to posters being shown in their own city or outside in their own province. But you are not, I take it, going to give a certificate to each poster, and therefore when these films move up country, as they all do in due course, how is the local authority going to know whether the poster has been approved by the board or not?

*Sir Charles Tegart:* The local authority would presumably have similar powers to censor the poster.

*Q.* Then doesn't the question arise whether it is necessary for the censor to act in the first instance; whether the local authority could not be left to take down an objectionable poster wherever it is found?

A. Power should be given to impound the posters, if they are considered to be highly objectionable, in exactly the same way as we impound the cut portion of the film.

*Chairman:* Would you have all these things submitted to the censor board or merely give power to the local authority to seize any poster which is highly objectionable?

A. I would put it in the hands of the board: I would prefer that.

*Mr. Green:* Plus the veto power to the local officers?

A. Yes.

*Chairman:* If that goes through the board wouldn't it be necessary to give some certificate that it has passed through the board so that the local authority may not unnecessarily interfere.

A. We can't stamp each poster—it would be quite impracticable. Besides these posters are stuck up high on the hoardings. Some of them are as big as a wall. If the local authority objects they can always say, "this has been passed by such and such a board." I take it they would not say that if it was not true.

*Q.* So then I may take it it is your opinion that this condemnation of the cinema as exhibited in this country by this Delegation is not justified?

A. No, certainly not.

*Mr. Bartley:* There are some very objectionable advertisements as well in the newspapers.

*Q.* Would you also include these in the censorship?

*Sir Charles Tegart:* I have said here in my report to the Chamber: "These advertisements describe in sensational language and in terms of very doubtful taste....." I think there are one or two instances.

*Q.* Well, I saw this morning a film being advertised by a figure in an attractive bathing costume and three lines.

*Colonel Crawford:* The poster at the Globe of a film they are showing is also objectionable.

*Chairman:* But at that rate if you want to censor the newspaper advertisements, it will lead to a great deal of difficulty.

*Mrs. Stanley:* I think they all come out together. They are all supplied together. You get the advertisements and posters with the film.

*Mr. Green:* And the newspaper's own criticism is sometimes supplied at the same time?

*Chairman:* Now the point is this. On the principles which are guiding your board I am afraid you will have to ban pictures of ladies in the magazines,—Play and London Life and such other magazines that come out.



*Sir Charles Tegart:* To start with of course, they don't come within the purview of the Cinema Act and secondly, in my opinion they appeal to a very much smaller audience than a large poster stuck up or a picture shown on the screen.

*Q:* That is quite true. But I was pointing out to you the difficulty of drawing the line. Simply because this happens to apply to the cinematograph you want to censor the newspaper advertisements, but magazines which are sold in the Gardens there, I saw last evening many of them contained nude pictures in the name of art.

*A:* Two wrongs don't make a right.

*Q:* Anyway, you would like to have control over newspaper advertisements also? I am pointing out to you the conflict that you will come into with the newspaper world.

*Mr. Murray Webb:* I don't know that that would be so. Because, as we have said, these particular posters and advertisements are supplied with the films themselves.

*Mr. Green:* You mean it would make no difference to the press if there is to be a picture or a bigger letter press?

*A:* Yes. They are obviously supplied by the trade.

*Mr. Neogy:* Supposing they make their own advertisements here and supply them to the press?

*Mr. Green:* They do so sometimes in Bombay.

*Mr. Neogy:* Would you have the same power to control the advertisement columns of the newspaper press?

*Chairman:* There is that practical danger. I mean, the press will complain that you are interfering with the liberty of the press and ask if they have not got the judgment to decide things for themselves. In that way they will begin to raise a howl.

*Mr. Mukherjee:* My personal opinion would be that in such cases we ought not to place all these posters and all these advertisements before the Board for censoring but the police under the ordinary law have got the power to ban all such things. They ought to exercise such power.

*Chairman:* But apparently the opinion of the board seems to be that that power is not adequate. It does not deal with all classes of posters. That is what I gather to be the opinion of the censor board. That is what we gathered from the Commissioner of Police yesterday. That he could only act in the case of obscenity, not of suggestiveness.

*Sir Charles Tegart:* I know of no legal powers vested in the Commissioner of Police which would have enabled me to deal with any of the posters. For instance, that "Quo Vadis" poster.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* Not under 292 of the I. P. C.?

*A:* No, not under any other section.

*Mr. Mukherjee:* In the same way as you ban obscene literature?

*Mr. Coatsman:* The question is, are they obscene in accordance with the interpretation given in the Penal Code?

*Mr. Green:* I want to ask one other question in regard to differences between different boards. The official figures show that the Bombay Board since it started has examined 5,700 films almost, and you told us that 14 of these have been objected to by your board. The Bombay Government reported that only 11 of their certificates have, during the past 7 years, been suspended anywhere in India. I don't want to bother you with the question whether it is 11 or 14. Let us assume it is 14. Is 14 out of 5,700 a very high proportion?

*Sir Charles Tegart:* No, we don't agree that it is. In fact, we say the differences between the boards are small. But we do think that when a difference occurs such as have occurred in the past, when the Board says, no, we ban it, and another board says, no, we allow it—there should be a final decision on the point.

*Q.* May I ask a question about those 14 films? Some of them you have already told us were not banned on general moral standards but on differences in local conditions.

*A.* That was in the case of the Sikh procession. Two were banned on religious grounds.

*Q.* I think some were on political grounds. Speaking from memory I think the film called "Orphans of the Storm" was passed in Bombay and not in Calcutta. It was exhibited in Bombay for quite a long time and was very much appreciated as a very fine picture. Well, as I can say from knowledge, the Bombay Board did not raise the slightest objection to its being banned here as they realised that conditions in Calcutta might be very different from those in Bombay. That was one of the cases in which your board had to take a different view of the film because of local conditions. And I think that is probably the case with at least half of the 14 cases. I only want to point it out, as Sir Charles agrees, that the number of real differences have been very small. Well, may I go to a particular case that probably you have in mind?—that of "The Triumph of the Rat". "The Triumph of the Rat" was put up for censorship in Bombay with the statutory declaration that it had been refused a licence in Bengal. The Board had the Bengal sub-committee's report, the Bengal Board's decision before it. A sub-committee of the Board—I was one of them—viewed the film. We started by asking if it was the identical film that was exhibited to your Board, and we were assured that it was. We sat there with growing amazement because we entirely failed to find certain definite suggestive points noticed in your report, which simply did not exist in the picture before us. We again asked at the end whether there had been no cut made. The local representative assured us that no cut had been made. We were so struck with this that we requested the whole board—the remaining members of the board—to see the film. They agreed with our report that something must have been changed and that, but for a few scenes which we wanted excised, there was no objection to its being certified. They also held that we could not surrender our legal obligation to make a decision, and therefore we certified the film as further excised. In correspondence with your board it appeared that when it was put up to you this film measured about 9,000 feet and when it was put up in Bombay it was 7,000 feet. Is not this an instance in which again there is really probably no difference between the two boards at all?—that if the film as exhibited to us in Bombay had been exhibited to you, it might have been passed?

*Mr. Murray Webb:* Very nearly 2,000 feet short?

*Q.* We actually had it measured in Bombay.

*Sir Charles Tegart:* That, as I told the board yesterday, is not what the Globe Theatres told me personally and the censor board. Mr. Laharry, I think I am correct in saying, told the board that the picture that as exhibited in Bombay was the identical picture which had been exhibited before us.

*Q.* No doubt it was the same film or part of the same, but have you any reason to doubt the conclusion of the Bombay board respecting the respective lengths?

*A.* Not at all. I am not questioning that for a moment. I am saying what we were told by Mr. Laharry on that point.

*Q.* The Board in Bombay was not aware that they had also appealed to the Local Government of Bengal when they passed this film. But even if they had, they would probably have passed it.

*A.* The only point I wish to make is this; I quite see that the excision of 2,000 feet or a quarter of the film would certainly make a difference, for the worst parts of the picture would make a tremendous difference. But it is possible that cases of this kind, with the machinery that we have now, may occur again. We may also take it as fairly reasonable that the Local Government will not lightly wish to go against the decision of its cinema committee. I mean unless there are very good reasons. It is not like taking it to an

independent authority. The bias of the Local Government would be towards supporting its board; and if a system exists by which a film can be definitely banned here and shown in Bombay, on other than local reasons, we think that is unsatisfactory.

*Q.* I propose to come to that point later with you. I only want to get clear the particular facts of this case. I am also, I suppose, somewhat jealous of the Bombay Board's reputation. I was wanting to clear the point that the difference in decision was not due to any superior morality on the part of the Calcutta Board.

May I just illustrate the question of different moral standards by another instance. This committee has seen a film passed by your Board without excision—I am referring to "The Merry Widow". Have the members of your board seen "The Merry Widow"?

*Mr. Murray Webb:* Yes

*Q.* Have you also seen "The Triumph of the Rat"?

*Mr. Murray Webb:* No, I have not.

*Q.* I wonder if any of you, ladies and gentlemen, have seen both. Did you think the morality of "The Merry Widow" was in every way suitable not only for this country but for every country?

*Mr. Henderson:* As far as I remember we only made certain cuts.

*Q.* According to your records no cuts were made at all.

*Chairman:* You passed it right through.

*Mr. Green:* I will give you the reference.

*Chairman:* The second part is all right. In the first part there was some objectionable matter.

*Sir Charles Tegart:* When was the picture passed?

*Mr. Green:* It was passed on the 14th February 1927,—the certificate No. being 8464. This is a copy of your register, it shows no endorsement at all. I am not in any way suggesting that the Bengal Board is lax. I might possibly suggest that occasionally in either Board something may get through which on a personal inspection might have been judged not desirable, and that possibly it is a little dangerous for one Board to criticise another.

I was very interested in your suggestion for overcoming these difficulties. That is that there should be a neutral appellate authority. I think it is a very useful suggestion. But as the Chairman pointed out, there have been further suggestions such as that an all-India board should be appointed for examining all imported films, leaving local boards to examine local productions. I want to ask you a few questions as regards your opinion as to the practicability of this, both from the point of view of censoring and from the point of the trade. Hitherto the majority of films have been imported at Bombay and, naturally, most of the witnesses who have seen us so far strongly advocated that if there should be a central board, it should be at Bombay, as being the chief port of import and the chief producing place.

*A.* Is it the chief producing place?

*Q.* Very easily. There are 7 or 8 companies turning out 12 to 18 films a year,—13 companies in the Presidency in fact, and, say, 8 of them in Bombay city.

*A.* But are they the principal importers?

*Q.* We have figures showing that the majority of imports as well as the chief censoring is effected at Bombay. The proportion of censoring is roughly 35 to 22 between Bombay and Calcutta. But I am asking you if you can tell me what the exhibitors here, the owners of films here, would do if their films had to come to Bombay for censoring? Their western films, their imported films? Would it necessitate the opening of an office in Bombay?

*A.* Well, that would be for them to say.

*Q.* Well, yes, perhaps I had better put that to them. It is of course possible that the central board might be situated in Calcutta,—there is no absolute reason why it should be in Bombay,—or at a neutral place like Delhi.

It has also been suggested that if we have a central board we could get a better class of inspectors or the members of the board themselves could inspect the films. If the central board was situated in this city to do the work of the whole of India, do you consider that you could get members to serve on the board in view of the great increase in work that they would have to undertake?

A. Are you imagining a part time board?

Q. Well, I would first ask whether the board could continue in its present guise?

A. That is to say, paid inspectors and a committee who would see all doubtful films?

Q. And do the work for the whole of India. The work for the whole of India at present involves 6½ hours film inspection a day every day in the week at present.

A. I don't see myself where you would get the people from, unless you had an unwieldy board.

Q. And you have already told us that your objection to an unwieldy board is that you get no continuity and no uniformity.

A. I think that the British Board of Censors only consists of 4 people and the President and Secretary, and neither the President nor the Secretary do any censoring work. The censoring work is done by the board. It is worked by 4 people.

Q. Of those four every film is seen by two?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you think if we had a central board it would be necessary to have stipendiary censors of that nature?

A. I do not think you would get properly qualified part time men to do that amount of work, 6½ hours a day.

Q. I understand also that the censors in the United Kingdom Board are paid what has been described as half time pay for full time work. They are retired gentlemen of independent means. Nevertheless their half time pay amounts to £800 to £1,000 a year. Do you think that similar gentlemen could be had in this country who though serving for half pay would give whole time to the work?

A. I do not think so at all. There is not that class to draw on here.

Q. Retired professional gentlemen?

A. No.

Q. What about retired Government officials?

A. European officials generally go home.

Q. Indian officials?

A. If you make it an Indian Board I dare say you might do it.

Q. Do many Indian officials retire in Calcutta? This is presumably a costly place.

Mr. Mukherjee: There are many retired officials here and gentlemen of means.

Q. Retired gentlemen of sufficient mental and bodily vigour to inspect films 6 or 7 hours a day every day of the week?

A. It may be difficult to get work out of them every day in the week. You may get three days' work in the week from them.

Q. Of course, you will then have to double your number of officers?

A. Yes.

Mr. Neogy: What about the leisured gentlemen who may not necessarily be retired Government officials?

A. Not merely retired Government officials but other gentlemen of means would be available in Calcutta.

Mr. Green: Of knowledge and experience?

A. Experience they will have to gather.

Q. They will have to learn it at the Board's expense?

A. Yes.

Chairman: You mean experience in censoring?

A. Yes.

Mr. Green: The censor has not only to be conversant with Indian conditions but with European and American conditions.

A. You may get one or two of that character, but it is difficult to get Indian gentlemen who have experience of English life and American life and have leisure enough to work as censor six days in the week.

Q. Am I right in supposing that if you could find gentlemen of that nature, they would probably aspire to more important spheres of work, possibly on legislative bodies?

A. But the seats are limited there.

Q. But they would have their ambition?

A. Yes.

Q. What is the total membership of the municipality in the city?

A. 90.

Sir Haroon Jaffer: Will you get honorary members like that?

A. Honorary members to work every day in the week?

Q. Or would they take less remuneration than what you get now?

A. Members of the Board are now paid at the rate of Rs. 16 a day.

Mr. Green: Such gentlemen as we have in mind, gentlemen of wide experience and high ability—what amount of remuneration do you think they would require for working six days a week or for three days a week?

A. For three days in the week you may get men if you pay Rs. 250 or Rs. 300 a month, quite a large number and with experience.

Q. Could the Board suggest any way by which funds could be raised to pay them without penalising the trade?

Sir Charles Tegart: We consider that it would be impossible to finance a board of that kind by any further taxation of the trade. It will have to be financed from general revenues. Of course, the customs revenue goes into general revenues. I do not know whether if that were credited you could not work it and make it pay for this.

Q. I think the Government of India have the greatest objections to earmarking any particular part of its customs revenue for any particular purpose. However, that is the only suggestion. You definitely don't think that the trade could stand any further taxation?

A. We do not consider it could stand anything of that kind.

Q. I have only one or two small points now which I want to ask you. Does your Board lay down that when a film is exhibited the actual certificate or a copy of the certificate must be present in the theatre available for inspection, whether in Calcutta or in the mofussil?

A. We insist on the Trailer certificate.

Q. I take it that if any endorsement is made it is made on the reverse of the certificate?

A. Yes.

Q. The Trailer certificate shown on the film only indicates the face value and not the endorsement? Should it not convey to district authorities in other parts of India that that is a film from which the Bengal Board has excised certain parts and therefore a film that needs particularly careful scrutiny when it is put on the screen?

Mr. Henderson: It may not necessarily.

Mr. Bartley: Just as the Bombay Board has a triangle which gives us a warning, we can add something.

*Q.* Would it not be possible if power be taken to insist that whenever a film is exhibited either the original or a certified copy of the actual certificate with the endorsements on the reverse should be available at the theatre so that the local authorities can see what excisions were ordered and whether those excisions have not been re-inserted?

*Mr. Bartley:* We do see that here; we only do so by arrangement with the exhibitors.

*Q.* I take it the Board does or is ready to issue duplicate certificates which could accompany any copy of a film upcountry?

*Sir Charles Tegart:* There is no objection to that. There will be considerable advantage in that.

*Q.* You think it will be advantageous?

*A.* Yes.

*Colonel Crawford:* You consider that your present inspection is satisfactory?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* In spite of the fact that a film like "The Merry Widow" can get through?

*A.* I have not seen that film, but I have seen reports.

*Q.* You would definitely object to scenes of drunken ladies being on the film?

*A.* That comes under the general type.

*Q.* In that film both men and women were shown as drunk.

*A.* I would object to that.

*Q.* You base your claim that the present system is satisfactory on the fact that you have had no public protest?

*A.* We got no complaints.

*Q.* Do you think the public are very quick at making complaints?

*A.* I have never found the public of Calcutta slow to complain about anything.

*Q.* Therefore there may be a certain amount of feeling here without any complaint reaching you?

*A.* No. My view is any adverse feeling at once comes up here.

*Q.* I notice that you have a part time Inspector of high qualifications and you can get him on Rs. 300 a month. Supposing you could not get a part time man, do you consider that Rs. 300 a month would be a sufficient remuneration for an Inspector of high qualifications?

*A.* No. I do not think I would get a man of that type under Rs. 1,500 a month,—the type of man I would want as an Inspector.

*Q.* Do you consider that the trade can be incorporated in your provisions for censorship in any way?

*A.* Actually on the Board?

*Q.* Yes, if they could be definitely brought in to assist in censoring. For instance, the Censorship Board in England is entirely a trade concern, and it is so in America too.

*A.* I think the trade could not take an unbiassed view.

*Q.* Do you think you would get better results by incorporating the trade in your system of censorship?

*A.* I would not approve of taking the trade generally on to the Board where they had decisions to arrive at, but I would approve of consulting them.

*Q.* You have such a system of consultation now?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* And it works satisfactorily?

*A.* We think so. It gives the trade an opportunity of saying what they want to say.

**Q.** Have the trade here any combination, any association of their own?

**A.** No. It is rather the other way round. You will hear that from the trade itself.

**Q.** Mr. Green brought out the fact that there was not really very much difference of opinion on moral standards between the Calcutta and Bombay Boards of Censors. Do you think that the existence of two Boards is liable to lower on the whole your standard of censorship?

**A.** No, I do not think so.

**Q.** You do not think that the trade are likely to take pictures to the Board which they feel is less strict in its censorship?

**A.** They cannot get away from the fact that, for instance, if they import a picture here and then take it to Bombay or Rangoon for censorship whenever it comes back here we see it.

**Q.** You see every picture?

**A.** Yes. One Member of the Board does.

**Q.** Don't you generally accept the Bombay Board of Censors' certificate?

**A.** We generally do, but we are not bound to accept it. The trade cannot force our hands by taking the pictures to other Boards.

**Q.** Supposing later as the trade increases you have to set up a board in Madras.....

**Chairman:** There is a Board in Madras.

**Colonel Crawford:** That is a small Board. Supposing later you have to set up a number of boards in other places, don't you think that there is a risk of danger to the uniformity of your standard?

**A.** Yes, but it seems to me that you are dealing in India with a vast continent and I think you must have local boards just as they have in England. The Film Censorship Board's certificate in England does not authorise the man to show the picture anywhere. The local authorities have their own licensing and power.

**Q.** But there is no particular danger of your standards being lowered?

**A.** I do not think so. Under our idea of the Board, Bombay and Calcutta will draw closer together.

**Q.** And your definite suggestion is a co-ordinating authority?

**A.** A central appellate authority.

**Q.** Appellate and not co-ordinating?

**A.** Under our scheme the central body would only function in the case of a definite difference of opinion between two boards. At present there would be no objection to the Secretary of our Board or members of our Board going over to Bombay and talking things over.

**Q.** But there is no definite system for that at present?

**A.** That is a matter of local arrangement between the two boards.

**Q.** It would not be arranged by your central authority?

**A.** The central authority only comes into operation when a difference of opinion arises.

**Mr. Green:** It would be an *ad hoc* tribunal?

**A.** Yes.

**Colonel Crawford:** As regards the censorship of posters, you are aware of the Australian system. They say, "The censors can exercise absolute control only over the imported posters and photographs, that is to say, over that class of advertising matter which is not generally, or cannot, be, re-produced in Australia". But they have a system also of censoring advertising matter, imported press books as it is called. But their general conclusion as regards clean advertising is this. They say, "Clean advertising here is not a matter for the Censorship alone, it can be obtained only by the co-operation of all parties, producers, importers, exhibitors, newspapers, and censors. And, of course, more important than all of these is a healthy

and educated public opinion". I take it that would be more or less your view on that question?

A. Generally speaking, I would agree with that. At the same time in a matter like that it is better to get the producers and the importers to co-operate, but if they do not co-operate you can still clean up your posters and handbills.

Q. Do you recommend our trying to find some method of co-operation of the trade in the work if it is required?

A. Certainly. But powers should be taken to enforce a decision if you cannot get the trade to see eye to eye with you.

Mr. Coutman: I take it that all the members of your Board belong to Calcutta?

A. Yes.

Q. Would I be right then in assuming that their horizon, so to speak, is bounded by Calcutta? For example, when your Board takes a film into consideration the audience you have in mind is the Calcutta audience, its suitability or non-suitability for a Calcutta audience?

A. No. I would not say so. Our idea is that a picture that we pass should be unobjectionable anywhere.

Q. The resident of Calcutta, I take it, naturally more sophisticated than the resident in a small mofussil town?

A. At the same time the population of Calcutta I would say contains representatives of almost every type of person that you meet in the mofussil or upcountry. You get the local villager here, you get the upcountry villager here.

Q. What I wanted to get at is this. You might pass a film which is quite suitable for Calcutta but which is not or may not be suitable for, say, a small town a couple of hundred miles inland.

A. Would you give me an idea of the picture you have in mind?

Q. In any picture, say, in which dancing is shown.

A. If the dancing is clean, is perfectly clean, I cannot see why it should be objectionable in a small town or in a mofussil place.

Q. I am trying to lead you on to a certain point. Very many of the inhabitants of Calcutta must have seen European dancing at some time or other.

A. You mean Indians?

Q. Yes.

A. I do not think so at all. In fact I have had one striking instance entirely to the contrary. An Indian gentleman of very high position here,—he saw dancing for the first time on board a ship going home.

Q. I was thinking of the last season in Simla. I remember myself on one occasion seeing coolies outside. A few coolies were staring in open mouthed watching a dance, while the others were playing cards, or sleeping or smoking and so on. Two or three times I asked who they were. They were all new men who had not been to Simla before and they had come up against something which was new. The point I am leading up to is this. You may get many a film which is more or less unobjectionable as far as Calcutta is concerned, but which may have, so to speak, a stronger impact on a less sophisticated community?

A. As a statement of general principle there is no question that it is correct.

Q. I want now to come to the question of the Social Hygiene Committee's report. You know that Mrs. Neville Rolfe made certain very sweeping statements. Suppose they are right to a certain extent. Now the average love scene which we see in a western film—to us of course it is all right, to the sophisticated Indian or the cinema goer it is all right, he has seen it for years. But what about the youth who is going there for the first time, or who has not been going to the cinema long? If I may use a very clumsy



word, might not these passionate love scenes, these strenuous kissings and closeups, have an aphrodisiacal effect on the youth?

A. You would not find those closeups in the Bengal films.

Q. You would cut them out?

A. Yes.

Mr. Ahmad: I have got experience of the mofussil, in fact I spent all my life in the mofussil. I was transferred only a year ago to Calcutta. I have got experience of England also. I have always pressed on the Board that some of the scenes which Mr. Coatman has referred to should be cut out, and I have succeeded in having some of them excised. So we have got that point of view also on the Board. In the mofussil the difference may be of a slight degree. These villagers who come here look at the Victoria Memorial Hall open mouthed, and therefore there is no point in that.

Q. The main position to which I wanted to lead up was this. You know for some time past there have been very general complaints against the cinema films, that they have been debauching the morals of the youth of the country and so on, and in the two debates which have taken place in the Council of State that charge was brought very prominently and was repeated continuously. Hitherto we have failed to have any real definite justification of that charge, and yet it may be that the western films which are shown have a very subtly demoralising effect; it may be most difficult or even impossible to put one's finger on a particular scene and say this is immoral, this is demoralising, and yet a succession of western films may have a continuous and certainly demoralising effect. Might it not be possible to counteract a good deal of the demoralising effect by a more rigid excision of these passionate kissing scenes, close huggings and so on and so forth?

Sir Charles Tegart: My answer to that is that any film which bears the Bengal Board's certificate will have that cut out of it unless there has been a mistake.

Q. Let us look at it from another point of view. You know, of course, the trade material which the exhibitors get from the producers, the illustrated catalogues and the advertising matter and so on which they get in advance and from which they choose their stuff—do the exhibitors ever consult the Board before they import films?

A. I have never had such a case.

Q. Would you welcome such a development?

A. I think it might possibly put the Board in a difficult position because the letter press that they get out might convey a misleading impression of the picture and I would hesitate to commit myself or the Board in any way on such literature.

Q. When you said the literature might convey a misleading impression, that was exactly what I was going to ask you next. Might it not be the way to improve the quality of posters and handbills? For example, on the literature that comes out the Board is consulted and it says: "Such and such film is undesirable." Well, then, the producers wonder why these films are banned in India. They enquire and they are told "the Bengal Board and the Bombay Board looked through the literature and copies of the posters and so on and they did not like them." Then the producer says: "The literature and the posters are exaggerated and they were intended to attract the public." Gradually they come to realise their position and think they must be more subdued in their representation.

A. You are assuming that literature comes out ahead of the picture. I have been told that the trade here have to buy pictures of which they only know the name, and in some cases they do not even know the name. In some cases pictures have been bought without even knowing their names.

Q. On the other hand, the exhibitors do get illustrated catalogues?

A. The advice of the Board on a question of that kind is always open to the trade here. As, say, a representative can come up to every meeting of our

Board and if he wishes to put any question of that kind to the Board we would be prepared to give him our opinion as far as it could be formed on it.

*Q.* Would you welcome such a development?

*A.* We would welcome any method of co-operation between the exhibitors and the Board.

*Q.* I raised this point because I am myself very strongly impressed with the undesirability of much of the advertising matter of the cinema and also I am strongly impressed with the difficulty, if not the impossibility, of dealing with it satisfactorily. It has occurred to me that if you have some such development as that the producers will have to realise that they must tone down their literature and their posters.

*A.* I think part of the trouble is due to the fact that pictures are allowed in America which would not be tolerated in England or in a great many other countries. America itself is its greatest market. India as compared with the United States of America would be utterly negligible. If all the cinemas in India were wiped out to-morrow I do not suppose it would affect the American cinema producers the least bit.

*Chairman:* They have got 20,500 cinemas in their own country, whereas we have got 350 cinemas.

*A.* Of these 350 cinemas a very large majority are very small and produce very little revenue.

*Mr. Coatsman:* Still America is America and the Americans are business people.

*Mr. Neogy:* I will just take up the point about the constitution of the Board about which I had to ask you a few questions yesterday. You have stated that all interests are adequately represented on the Bengal Board of Censors. Is that the view of the Board as a whole, or of certain individual members of the Board?

*A.* I think you had better ask the members.

*Q.* You are the spokesman?

*A.* As far as I know.—I am subject to contradiction by any member here— as far as I know, all interests are generally represented.

*Mr. Mukherjee:* My opinion in the Board was, and still is, that in the Cinema Act it is mentioned that the majority of the members should be non-officials. No doubt, in all the Boards we have a majority of non-officials, but I would like to have the majority to be elected. Here also we have got elected members. But I would like certain electorates to be defined in the rules so that it may not be open to the Local Government to come to one electorate and not to go to another. For example, the university ought to be represented as a body from the educational point of view. There might be other bodies which would send up representatives here. Therefore my view is that not only should there be an elected majority of Indians on the Board, but that majority should be elected by Indians, because I happen to be the only elected Indian on the Board. Two years ago the representative of the Corporation was also an European. I should like to have a larger element of Indians on this Board. Only last week I got some literature of the London Board and also of the American Board.

*Mr. Green:* May I ask you what Board you are referring to in America?

*A.* I am referring to the National Board.....

*Mr. Green:* You mean the Board of Review? If so, I may tell you that it is not an official body.

*Chairman:* I don't think, Mr. Mukherjee, you need tell us anything about the constitution of other Boards.

*A.* With regard to the constitution of the Indian Boards, their offices are situated in the Police Commissioner's office. Whether the Board's office should be located there or not is a matter for the Committee to consider, and also whether it ought to be a part of the police department. The Commissioner of Police happens to be the President *ex-officio* or he is appointed as

the President by the Local Government. Some other Assistant Commissioner or Deputy Commissioner acts as the Secretary and we have other representatives of other interests. But the principal officers of the Board are connected with the police. I would not personally like that it should be a department of the police in this way. Certainly the police, as other departments of the Government, ought to be represented in a Board like this, but not in the way in which it is now represented.

*Chairman:* May I ask in that connection whether the press or the public have raised any objection to the constitution of the Board as it is now?

A. I have not followed that. I raise that point because I have not seen any objection from them.

*Mr. Neogy:* Is it not a fact that most of the criticisms about the operation of the Cinema Act have either followed the appointment of this Committee or just preceded it?

A. This question was raised towards the end of last year when some people came from England about the Empire film business.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* Do you consider then that the present Board is unsatisfactory?

A. I would not make such a sweeping statement as that.

*Mr. Green:* You said just now about somebody connected with Empire films. Whom are you referring to?

A. I read in the papers that a gentleman came from England in this connection. We read some articles in the press about it.

*Mr. Green:* I know that a film tourist came to Bombay some time ago and was very indignant with the Customs for charging him duty.

*Mr. Neogy:* Perhaps Mrs. Stanley also may have a statement to make, because she will appear, immediately the Board withdraws, on behalf of the Vigilance Association, and the Association says this: "We should like to see more educational representatives on the Board including one Indian lady."

*Mrs. Stanley:* That is my view.

*Mr. Neogy:* Sir Charles Tegart is very anxious to avoid increasing the size of the Board. Supposing we were to give effect to the representation made by Mrs. Stanley on behalf of the Calcutta Vigilance Association, how would you adjust the addition of a member or members to the Board? Would you request either of the two Indian gentlemen to withdraw in order to make room for one Indian lady?

*Sir Charles Tegart:* I don't think I can answer the question relating to a proposal which has not been put forward by me. I think you should put it to the person who has put forward that proposal on behalf of another association.

Q. In any case, you are not in favour of increasing the membership at all, and certainly not the Indian personnel?

A. I think you have taken the thing on lines which I did not put it. I say that all interests, as far as I know, are represented, and it is open, for instance, for Government or for the Vigilance Association to appoint an Indian lady.

Q. I think we are entitled to know from the Board as to what they think of its constitution?

A. I personally cannot say what the Board thinks of its constitution.

Q. Mrs. Stanley represents the interests of ladies, Messrs. Webb and Henderson represent the Calcutta Trades Association and the Bengal Chamber of Commerce, both of which are exclusively European bodies. I suppose there are corresponding bodies to represent the Indian commercial interests. Are they represented at all? Then the Calcutta Corporation is represented, and the Army Department is also represented. That exhausts the list of so-called elected members. Then there are two nominated members, one representing the Education Department, and it is an accident, perhaps, that he is an Indian?

A. Have you looked up his predecessor in making that statement? Might I ask you what you meant in saying that it is an accident that he is an Indian? In making an insinuation of that kind, I should like to know whether you have looked up who his predecessor was in saying that it is an accident?

Q. You have supplied us with the names of the present members only. When you refer to sub-committees, I take it they are appointed under rule 18 of the rules which runs as follows: "In the event of the report of the Inspector being unfavourable or in the event of the Board being doubtful as to the suitability or otherwise of a film for public exhibition, the Board shall appoint a sub-committee" and so on. I may describe it as the statutory sub-committee. As far as I have been able to understand the position, the Indian members are appointed to these statutory sub-committees only when there are any communal questions relating to the films?

A. That is not so. I would not accept that at all.

Q. When there is a communal tinge respecting a film, I suppose a Hindu or a Muhammadan is appointed, and if there is a military question, a military man is appointed and so on. Is that not so?

Mr. Mukherjee: The appointment of the sub-committee is not actually made by the Board, but it is made either by the President or by the Secretary because these questions arise between two meetings of the Board.

Sir Charles Tegart: I would also further qualify that statement by saying that where the matter comes before the Board on occasions, the sub-committee is decided at the Board meeting itself.

Mr. Neogy: But the whole Board has not an opportunity of viewing the film and it is only the sub-committee which views the film.

Sir Charles Tegart: If any particular member wishes to view the film, it is open to him to do so.

Q. In what proportion of cases is the Inspector's report generally confirmed?

A. I cannot give you statistics. May I ask first of all what is the period for which you require this information?

Q. During the last two years, in how many cases has the Inspector's report been confirmed and in how many cases has it been rejected?

A. I shall have to obtain the information.

Q. Then please supply it to us under three heads, (1) the number of cases in which the report was confirmed totally, (2) modified and (3) totally rejected.

When the report is placed before the Board and when they appoint a sub-committee, is the sub-committee expected to examine the film with reference to the report of the Inspector or independently of that report?

A. The sub-committee is deputed to examine the picture on their own responsibility, and I presume they read and pay a certain amount of attention to the report of the Inspector which preceded it. Obviously it is an independent investigation.

Mr. Henderson: I would say that they keep an entirely open mind in the matter when examining the film.

Mr. Neogy: The British Board issues two kinds of certificates. The "U" certificate which entitles a picture to be exhibited universally, and there is the "A" certificate if the film is fit only to be shown to adults. Do you get these two kinds of certificates here when you examine the films?

A. Yes, we do.

Q. And in viewing the "A" certificates, you don't make any distinction between suitability for adults and children?

A. I answered that question yesterday, I think.

Q. Even in the case of "A" certificates, you allow the picture to be shown universally in India?

A. That question also I answered yesterday.

**Q.** It is always possible, I take it, to ascertain whether a particular film has been passed by the Board of Censors in England or not?

**A.** We ask the exhibitor here to produce it, and it is possible for him to convey direct information. The only way of making it certain will be by referring the matter to the Home Board.

**Q.** Did you deal with the film called " Mons " in Calcutta?

**A.** I cannot say definitely unless I look it up.

**Q.** Have you seen it?

**A.** No, not to my knowledge.

**Q.** The Board was not called upon to express an opinion on it?

**A.** I cannot answer without looking it up.

**Mr. Henderson:** I don't think it has been shown in Calcutta.

**Mr. Green:** We saw it actually exhibited in Peshawar.

**Mr. Neogy:** We have a statement before us showing the staff employed by the Board for the purpose of inspection of the films. You have an Inspector for part time on Rs. 300, and an additional Inspector whose pay is Rs. 100—5—150. Is he a whole-time man?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** What are his qualifications for his job which in your judgment entitle him to be appointed as an additional inspector?

**A.** He is sufficiently educated and we considered him as intelligent.

**Q.** Has he to act under the instructions of the inspector or has he got to view the films independently?

**A.** That question I answered yesterday, I think.

**Q.** Do you consider that for the salary you offer you could attract a really efficient and responsible man to do the work?

**A.** I consider that he is quite sufficiently paid, according to the pay generally given to that type of man in Calcutta for the work that he has got to do.

**Q.** I can understand when you say that type of man, but what about the type of work?

**A.** I have already answered that question. I say that I consider that he is both adequately paid and qualified for the work which he has got to do.

**Q.** You don't think that the present appointment offers him temptations?

**A.** Do you suggest that he is bribed? What is the idea underlying that question? Personally, I have no information on that subject; if anybody has got to make any complaint about it, I should certainly investigate it.

**Chairman:** I understood him to say that the additional inspector merely inspects the cinemas.

**A.** He inspects only topical pictures and makes notes of them. Any picture of any importance is examined by the Inspector.

**Mr. Neogy:** I see that you have banned the film called " Orphans of the Storm." It has been allowed to be exhibited in Bombay and even in the Punjab subject to certain cuts. What are the local conditions in Bengal that justify this differential treatment?

**A.** The reasons which led the Board to ban the film are on record and can be produced if you like to see them.

**Q.** Yes, I want to know the reasons. Now, coming to the Register showing particulars of films examined, please turn to page 11 and refer to Serial No. 7267 " The Birth of a Nation." Among other things, we find this endorsement " Omit all Parliament scenes ". Why is that?

**A.** I cannot say anything from this Register without looking up the papers.

**Q.** Am I right in supposing that it was cut out purely on political grounds?

**A.** You can draw whatever conclusion you like.

**Q.** Then again take 7640, page 33, "Bright Shawl", where you say under Part III "Omit the sub-title 'And my poor brother's only sin was to love his native land'". What is wrong in it?

**A.** It is impossible, I think, to judge of these things apart from the context simply from the brief notes put down here.

**Q.** Do you give any indication to the trade as to the grounds on which you ask them to make these cuts which may act as a guide for their future conduct when importing films?

**A.** We do everything that we can.

**Q.** Then again take page 36, Serial No. 7691, "Fortune's Mask", and you say there "omit in Part I the following sub-titles: (i) 'What are the additional expenses'", and then under (ii) you say "omit the title, 'I have revised the civil list—increasing all our salaries by one-third, etc.'". I don't see anything wrong in it. Does this indicate the nervousness of people who benefited under the Lee concessions?

**A.** I don't see how you could draw any conclusions from these brief notes. How can you draw any conclusion from an excerpt like this put down in just a few words and altogether divorced from the context. I really cannot help you. I cannot carry all these things in my head.

**Q.** I should be very thankful if you could oblige us with a written answer.

**A.** I again say if you tell me on what points you want information, I shall be only too pleased to supply it to you. Here I would appeal to the Chairman and ask how we can discuss the history of the pictures from a few lines.

*Chairman:* Mr. Neogy, please give a list of points on which you want further information.

*Mr. Neogy:* I did not know that the Board was not ready to explain their action. In Bombay the President of the Board did not take up such an attitude at all. If the witness is not in a position to answer the questions, he can take time.....

*Sir Charles Tegart:* That is what I say. If you want information on any particular picture, we can supply it to you, but I certainly cannot carry in my head all the reasons which led us to make a particular cut in a particular picture. May I ask, Sir, if it would not be better if the Secretary of your Committee were instructed to write to us officially asking for any information which this gentleman requires?

*Mr. Neogy:* I think I have a right to ask these questions here, and if you are not in a position to answer them.....

*Sir Charles Tegart:* I may say at once to save the time of the Committee and also my own time, I cannot possibly answer this question.

*Chairman:* Both of you discussing the point prevent me from giving a ruling. If you want any information, Mr. Neogy, on any specific points, you better make a note of them and ask for further information.

*Mr. Neogy:* That, I submit, is a new procedure we are trying to adopt. That was not the procedure followed in Bombay, and the Chairman of the Board in Bombay readily gave us all information, and the present witness also gave answers to some of your questions this morning on these very lines, and if he chooses not to answer my questions, all I can do is to make a complaint to you, Sir. I think, Sir, I am entitled to put these questions and to get an answer from the witness.

*Chairman:* I don't say that you are not entitled to put your questions. I don't want to shut out these things. But you can make out a list of the points upon which you want further information.

*Sir Charles Tegart:* Perhaps some other member of the Board might be able to give the information you want.

*Mr. Neogy:* I don't mind who answers it.

*Chairman:* I don't think this sort of desultory discussion will carry us far, I must stop this desultory conversation. Please go on, Mr. Neogy, with your questions.

*Mr. Neogy:* If there is any member of the Board present here who can give us this information, we shall be very much obliged. That is a formal request I make to all members of the Board.....

*Sir Charles Tegart:* It must be addressed to each member individually.

*Mr. Neogy:* Take the last one on page 36, No. 7691?

A. To whom is the question addressed?

Q. I ask if any gentleman present here can give us the information.....

*Chairman:* Which cut do you refer to, Mr. Neogy?

*Mr. Neogy:* I am referring to the cut under head (ii) "I have revised the Civil list—increasing all our salaries by one-third".

*Sir Charles Tegart:* I understood that the President ruled that the President of the Local Board should supply that information later on.

*Chairman:* Are you prepared to answer, Sir Charles? Or you want time to answer it?

*Colonel Crawford:* Might I suggest, Sir, that we address a letter to the Bengal Board of Censors asking for such information as we may want.....

*Mr. Neogy:* Now you have referred to the difference in standard between Great Britain and India and in reply to Mr. Coatman you said in effect that certain aspects of western life are not generally seen by the Indians in actual life, and therefore, although they may be objectionable from the Indian point of view, they do not produce any harm, whereas a representation of these things on the screen would do great harm to the Indians. Now I don't know if you had to undertake strict policing of the maidan in the evenings in order to prevent certain incidents there some time ago?

A. I do not quite understand what the question is or what bearing it has on the case?

Q. You hold that the Indians in Calcutta have not got any opportunity of seeing certain aspects of western life.

A. I think my answer has been completely distorted. I said I had one instance of an educated Indian gentleman who saw dancing for the first time on board ship of his first voyage home. That was my statement.

Q. And you concluded that very few Indians had any opportunities of seeing these things.

A. My statement on that particular point was exactly as I put it.

Q. Then what use was that example to you? What does it matter if in one particular case an Indian gentleman had not seen dancing till he was on board a ship? It had no reference to our inquiry.

A. That is for you to consider.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* I think we began with the second part of the questionnaire. The first part deals with the film industry in India. I suppose the board is in favour of encouraging the film industry in India?

A. I think so.

Q. What measures are necessary to help this industry to grow?

A. I don't feel myself that I am in a position to offer any help to the committee on that point.

*Mr. Ahmad:* I should suggest that the services and advice of an expert from Europe, from England or America, be made available to the people who are actually engaged in the industry here. That an expert be brought out, and also that selected Indians be sent out to England or to America to learn the film trade.

Q. An expert be sent out here to teach school boys and others—you mean to start a class?

A. To advise the people actually engaged in producing films; to see their studios and to tell them how to improve them and all that. Also I would

recommend sending out select Indians who have got an aptitude to learn about film producing in England and in America. These are the two things that occur to me.

*Q.* I think there was some time ago a suggestion from the Government of India to have the Collector of Customs on your board. And I suppose the board or the Bengal Government probably didn't approve of it. It was probably not necessary then. Do I understand that the Customs Act is not known to the Police Commissioner or his deputy? And is that the reason why a Customs Collector is not on the board?

*Sir Charles Tegart:* May I see the reference from Government about the appointment of the Collector of Customs?

*Q.* Well, it is in the reports somewhere. I leave it at that. Do you approve of the appointment of the Collector of Customs to the Board? Won't it be a good thing to have the Collector of Customs on the Board?

*A.* For what particular purpose?

*Q.* To assist the board to come to proper decisions about customs matters.

*A.* But what particular line of assistance?

*Q.* Well, for the import and export of indecent films or anything of that kind?

*A.* That is always available. The question of the import of indecent films, if they were imported, it would be reported to the police at once, if indecent films were imported or exported to the knowledge of the Collector of Customs.

*Q.* Has he got any studio to find out these things?

*A.* Well, if he has not got any knowledge, it is no use bringing him on the board to give us that information.

*Q.* Do you think, as customs duty is being taken by the Government of India, there ought to be a studio provided for the Collector of Customs to find out these things?

*A.* A studio? I am afraid I don't understand.

*Q.* I mean each and every film that came in through the port, if it is viewed by the Collector of Customs in the studio I suggest, it will be less work for the Board of Censors here.

*A.* The Board could not relegate their powers to the Collector of Customs.

*Q.* But under the Sea Customs Act, sections 18 (2) and 19A, there is already a power for the Customs Collector to see these things there at the port.

*A.* As far I know, no system exists here whereby films are projected in a studio.

*Q.* I suppose some of the members know something about the Customs Act here?

*A.* Yes, I suppose so.

*Q.* The Commissioner of Police has got a lot of heavy duties to perform and I don't suppose he finds much time for the work of the board. I would like to know, out of the films 674 censored last year, how many films did you go and see yourself?

*A.* On sub-committees? I could give the information if you will give me the question.

*Q.* As you are yourself the Commissioner of Police I hope you can speak without any reference. How many films you have seen out of the 674?

*A.* Seen where? In theatres? Or on sub-committees?

*Q.* Anywhere, during the last year, from April 1926 to March 1927.

*A.* It is a very difficult question for me to answer. I will make a wild guess and say 150.

*Mr. Murray Webb:* There is just one point. Does that 150 films include things like topical pictures, because if it does that rather makes the question.....



**Q.** Whatever films you pass or prohibit here do you inform the District Magistrates or the provincial boards of the other provinces?

*Sir Charles Tegart:* We inform the other censor boards.

**Q.** Or District Magistrates of your own province?

**A.** District Magistrates we don't. Except by gazette notification. They see the notification in the Government gazette if such notification appears in connection with any film.

**Q.** It will be a good thing to have the censor board self-supporting? Considering you had a grant from Government last year of Rs. 1,000 and a loan of Rs. 6,000.

**A.** We have refunded everything.

**Q.** All that? Even the grant?

**A.** No, we have not refunded the original grant of a thousand.

**Q.** Well, then it is not self-supporting yet?

**A.** Oh, yes, we are self-supporting. We have got Rs. 10,000 of our own.

**Q.** As you have taken a thousand rupees from Government, I understand this sum includes in the Rs. 2,500 which were paid to the members of the board for fees in a year.

**A.** I cannot say offhand but I will tell you the figures.

**Q.** Well, I would like to know whether, in the event of a smaller remuneration being offered, you would be able to get members to serve on the board?

**A.** I cannot answer the question. I don't know. I have not tried. It is hardly a question that I can answer. The board are appointed by Government and the fees are laid down by Government.

*Chairman:* I suppose he wants to know whether you can get people in Calcutta for less remuneration than that?

**A.** Certainly, you can get people to come for nothing. The question whether you would get a board which would maintain the same standard of efficiency for nothing is another matter and there I would say: no.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* Is there any Board in England which informs you anything about the film producing companies—about films produced in England?

**A.** Any Board in England which informs me here of any film companies? A Censor board?

**Q.** Yes, or any other kind of board, for informing you of the films that have been produced there.

**A.** Not as far as I am aware.

**Q.** It would be a good thing if such a board is established in order to assist the British films coming here?

**A.** You mean, to tell us what films have been produced in Great Britain?

**Q.** And to tell you what is the monthly and yearly output and the companies which produce films?

**A.** That might help the trade but I cannot see how it can be of any material assistance to us.

**Q.** Will it be useful for the trade?

**A.** The trade presumably can say.

**Q.** But there is no board there in England?

**A.** That is a point on which I really could not give information.

**Q.** Have you ever seen among the 150 films you have viewed, any of the following: "The Great Circus Mystery," "The Samson of the Cinema," "The Hope Diamond Mystery," "Palace of Darkened Windows."

**A.** I don't think so.

**Q.** Or any other film which showed Indians in shady colours?

A. You mean in a degraded light.

Q. Where the Indian is shown as a cheat or rogue.

A. You mean after censorship or before?

Q. Before or after censorship.

A. The Indian of this country or the Indian of America?

Q. The Indian of this country.

A. No, I cannot recollect any.

Q. I suppose if these films are produced in India they are censored before they are sent abroad?

A. There would be nothing, as far as I know, to prevent a film being produced here and sent abroad without censorship.

Q. I just want to know whether certain missionary films went to England for the collection of money in which Indians were shown in a bad colour. I just want to know whether films exported from here, or films made in India, are all censored before being sent abroad?

A. Not necessarily. We as a board only deal with pictures intended for exhibition in Bengal. We have nothing to do with any other kind of film.

Q. When films are produced here and sent out, whether they should not be viewed before hand. What is your opinion on the point?

A. As to whether films produced here intended for export should not be viewed before exported? It would require, of course, an alteration in the Act to do it.

Q. Don't you think it would be advisable to do it so that Indians may not be badly depicted elsewhere?

A. Well, it does not apply *mutatis mutandis* to the European.

Q. Well, we can control our own export.

A. I have seen many pictures of the west.

*Chairman:* Well, that is a matter for them to consider. In fact, one of the matters urged is that if westerners are misrepresented by western pictures it is up to them to protect themselves.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* Won't it be better to censor stories and scenarios in their original form before production to avoid rejection afterwards?—and to save a great deal of loss to the producing companies?

A. I don't see how you could decide on a scenario which might read unobjectionably but which would be acted in an objectionable manner. The fact that the scenario was free from objection would not necessarily ensure that the connected production of the picture was unobjectionable.

Q. In order to prevent the production of obscene or undesirable films for private circulation or to export abroad or to Indian States, do you think that all producers should be licensed and registered and their works or studios periodically inspected?

A. I have already suggested in my evidence yesterday that studios should be licensed and liable to inspection.

Q. Yes, I see you have said that yesterday as Commissioner of Police, and as President of the Board, you say that again.

A. As President of the Board I can say it as committing my own opinion but I cannot commit the other members to it.

Q. Are you all agreed?

*Mr. Mukherjee:* We are all agreed. I think the board as a whole gave its opinion that all these places ought to be licensed, whether that would be the result or not.

*Sir Charles Tegart:* That was the object of the question—about objectionable pictures.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* Have you ever stopped indecent films by parcel post or anything like that?

*Sir Charles Tegart:* The postal authorities have power already under the law to deal with indecent matter which they know is being sent through the post.

*Q.* Well, they will have to open all these parcels.

*A.* Sometimes they do.

*Q.* It is a great improvement, I suppose, to have a lady member on the board, isn't it?

*A.* We are very glad to have Mrs. Stanley on the board.

*Q.* Do you think it is an advantage or a handicap to have members of Vigilance Societies on the Board?

*Mr. Murray Webb:* We think it is an advantage.

*Q.* May I know how many times Mrs. Stanley has seen the pictures out of this 674?

*Mrs. Stanley:* I go on an average twice a week always to the cinema.

*Q.* Then you must have seen almost all the pictures. That is very good.

*A.* I visit the Indian theatres as well.

*Q.* Would you advocate to have a chief censor at some important place and a deputy censor at Calcutta or another place with advisory committees?

*Sir Charles Tegart:* That is not the suggestion of this board.

*Q.* But would you like it, if such a thing were done?

*A.* A Chief Censor with deputy censors? Where would the Chief Censor be?

*Q.* Well, it would be for the Government of India to decide.

*A.* And the deputy censors?

*Q.* At the other places,

*A.* And would they all be assisted by boards same as we have here?

*Q.* Yes.

*A.* Without remuneration?

*Q.* Yes, honorary.

*A.* And would the censor have to follow the advisory board's opinion?

*Q.* It will be for him to decide.

*A.* Would it be compulsory?

*Q.* It will be done as in the Excise Department.

*A.* You mean the Chief Censor would be compelled to accept the advice of the Board?

*Q.* He would not be compelled to do so.

*A.* He would be a dictator?

*Q.* I think so.

*A.* I think that would be a retrograde movement.

*Mr. Mukherjee:* But the Calcutta Board has given its opinion against advisory boards.

*Q.* Are you in favour of raising the examination fees?—from Rs. 5 a thousand feet?

*A.* There is no necessity, as far as the Bengal Board is concerned, to raise the fees as the board is at present self-supporting.

*Q.* But for other boards that are not self-supporting?

*A.* That is for them to consider.

*Mr. Ahmad:* But I suppose it is desirable to have uniform rates.

*Sir Charles Tegart:* Yes, I should think so, certainly.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* Are there any British film agencies here in Calcutta?

*Sir Charles Tegart:* That I think the trade would be able to give more accurate information than I can.

*Q.* One more question and I finish. Are there certain films shown here which depict *namaz* (prayers). It is not properly performed. In some places it looked like mockery. Have you seen any such pictures here?

*Mr. Ahmad:* Yes, I have seen many of them.

*Q.* Did you ever notice anything?

*A.* You mean the *namaz* shown is not correctly performed. Well, I have seen the *namaz* performed here as well as the *namaz* performed in Woking, England. The westerners perform it differently, they don't do it in the proper way. You are referring to the *namaz* shown in the pictures?

*Q.* Yes, if there are such inaccuracies, don't you think they ought to be excised?

*A.* No, I don't think so.

*Q.* Why not? It hurts the feelings of a Muslim if prayers are shown in a different light.

*A.* Well, I don't know what particular film you are referring to, but I have seen Englishmen and English ladies performing prayers.

*Q.* You are speaking of Mussulmans?

*A.* Yes, I am speaking of English Mussulmans.

*Chairman:* What he means is a man representing a Muhammadan on the films who does not do the *namaz* properly.

*A.* No, I have not seen that.

*Q.* If such things are there they are fit to be removed, don't you think so?

*A.* Well, if it is mere ignorance, that may not be objectionable. It all depends on the intention. If it is done in an insulting way or with the object of ridiculing the *namaz*, it would be objectionable. It all depends upon the context.

### Written Statement of the Calcutta Vigilance Association.

1. The Calcutta Vigilance Association is a voluntary organisation whose main object is the promotion of purity in public morals. Therefore cinematograph exhibitions are of great interest to this Association and since 1923 Government has appointed a member representing this Association to the Bengal Board of Censors. Mrs. Stanley has represented the Calcutta Vigilance Association continuously since 1st April 1924, and is specially qualified for this work as she had 7½ years' work in charge of Women Police in England when supervision of cinemas formed a regular part of her duties.

2. Indians of all classes frequent cinemas in Calcutta, the cheaper seats being crowded for all performances.

In theatres specializing in Hindu Mythological dramas large numbers of women and children attend.

In other cinemas the attendance of children under 14 is small but adolescents (chiefly students) attend in increasingly large numbers.

24. (a) Yes. Films of low moral tone dealing with "Sex" questions; "Crook" films; Films giving false standard of luxurious living, leading to debauchery and vicious pleasures; Revolutionary scenes; and Films in which vice is seen to triumph over virtue.

(b) Yes.

(c) Films as given in 24 (a) have distinctly harmful influence on adolescents.

(d) The Bengal Board deals efficiently with such films but our members frequently complain of films shown under the Bombay Certificate and have frequently addressed the Bombay Vigilance Association with regard to these.

25. Yes, certainly.

26. Yes.

27. Yes, decidedly—especially American films giving an erroneous idea of laxity in social and moral customs; also films of the "Apache" type.

28. See reply to 24.

29. The Calcutta Vigilance Association consider that a wise use of such classification would be beneficial, as it would indicate to parents and guardians that such films are unsuitable for children and young persons. Cinema Managers would be required to prohibit children, apparently below the age of 16, from entering theatres for such performance *unless accompanied by responsible adults*, on whom would fall the onus of allowing their charges to witness unsuitable pictures.

This would be an easy matter in India, where comparatively few children attend cinema performances alone. In England special arrangements have to be made to deal with many hundreds of children of all ages, who go to cinemas in parties, without adult guardians.

30. The Calcutta Vigilance Association would like to see provision made to prohibit generally children under 12 unless accompanied by guardians. It would also be a great advantage if Cinema Managers would arrange for regular Children's Performances. In a town like Calcutta if even one of the central Cinema Houses had a weekly Children's Performance (preferably on Saturday afternoon) and made it genuinely attractive, it is thought that parents and school authorities would welcome the arrangement.

31. Yes.

32. Yes, on the whole; we should like to see members appointed for 3 years instead of one, also we should like to see more Educational representatives including one Indian lady.

33. (a), (b) and (c) No.

34. (a) No.

(b) Yes. There should be a Central Board in addition to the Provincial Boards, and no film banned by any one Board should be shown in any part of India without the permission of the Central Board.

35. (a) There should be greater uniformity in the formation of Boards and more representatives of Social and Educational organisations.

(b) No.

36. (a) Yes, so far as Bengal is concerned.

(b) No.

37. (a) No.

(b) Yes, decidedly.

38. Yes. See reply to 24 (d).

39. No.

40. Yes. Provision of powers in this respect is most important.

Yes. Pictures of half-clad women are objectionable and attract crowds of young men who enjoy them as indecent.

41. Yes, in Bengal.

44. We think the Press could help greatly in improving the standard of pictures shown by well-written articles of general criticism, such as appear in English papers, in place of the present Trade "puff" which appears each week.

45. (a) Yes.

(b) Certainly.

### **Oral Evidence of Mrs. S. A. STANLEY, representing the Calcutta Vigilance Association, on Tuesday, the 13th December 1927.**

*Chairman:* How are you connected with this Association?

A. I am now an ordinary member, but I was for a time its Joint Secretary.

**Q.** This memorandum which was given to us, was it passed in any committee meeting?

**A.** Yes. A special committee meeting was called to consider the question of reporting to the Indian Cinema Committee. The general views of the committee were taken at a meeting of the Committee, and Mr. James and myself were deputed to put the replies in the proper form and submit them to you.

**Q.** Mr. James is the Secretary?

**A.** We were Joint Secretaries for some time and he is now Secretary.

**Q.** After you made this draft was it again placed before the committee?

**A.** I think it is probable, but I am not able to say from my own knowledge.

**Q.** Can you tell us how the committee is composed?

**A.** I have got here the prospectus. (Handed in.)

**Q.** How many members were present on that occasion?

**A.** The full executive committee was present and I think they consisted of 15 members. As far as I remember there were only two English members and the rest were all Indians.

**Q.** I see from this that it consists of 7 members.

**A.** Then there must have been others. There were more than 7 people present on the occasion.

**Q.** The object of this Association is the promotion of purity in public morals?

**A.** That is the principal aim.

**Q.** You are deputed to look after the cinema?

**A.** Yes. There is one special group that interests itself in visiting cinemas, and at the annual meeting they elect a representative to represent them on the Board of Censors.

**Q.** You were in charge of Women Police in England?

**A.** Yes. That was in England during the War and for 3 or 4 years afterwards. Otherwise I have spent the greater part of my life in India. I have lived in different parts of India,—15 years in Madras, 5 years in Bombay and so on.

**Q.** Do you think the censorship adopted in Bengal is quite sufficient?

**A.** Yes. I think on the whole it is very adequate.

**Q.** And any objectionable features there may be in the films—you think they are sufficiently safeguarded by the action of the Censorship Board in Calcutta of which you have had experience for the last four years?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** I suppose you also see the films passed by other provinces here?

**A.** The Bengal Board issue rotation cards to all their members allotting certain cinemas which they have to visit every week. I invariably visit my cinema and if I have time I visit other cinemas too,—Indian cinemas as well as cinemas principally for Europeans.

**Q.** Which are the ones which cater mainly for Europeans?

**A.** Those that are situated in Chowringhee, but even at these, Indians form a large proportion of the audience. The cheaper seats are always crowded at every performance.

**Q.** Have you attended Indian films?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Are they exhibited at all on the Chowringhee side?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** In all the cinemas, or in only one or some of them?

**A.** Recently they have been exhibiting at the Albion Theatre which has been lately reorganised. In Chowringhee they show principally European

films. I find at the Albion Theatre where they are now showing Indian films they do not draw anything like the same audience as the more successful western films.

*Q.* I suppose in those quarters there are more Anglo-Indians, Europeans or the so-called educated Indian or the anglicised Indians.....

*A.* One may say more sophisticated Indians attend those theatres, but in the northern quarters of the town and the farther south where Hindu mythological dramas are shown, you get a large attendance entirely of Indians. In these theatres I found a very large audience of women all accompanied by children. This was when mythological films were shown.

*Q.* But what about western films?

*A.* No.

*Q.* Indian ladies do not care so much for western shows?

*A.* No.

*Q.* They care more for their own Indian shows?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* I suppose that is also your experience with regard to the so-called illiterate or working classes?

*A.* That I cannot say, because in my experience, in all the houses where they are showing Indian films or European films the cheapest seats where the illiterates go are always crowded at every performance.

*Q.* I do not know whether it is safe to say that those who go to the cheaper seats are generally illiterate because from our experience we find they make a noise on seeing the captions. They read them aloud. Has that also been your experience?

*A.* That I have noticed too.

*Q.* So that it is difficult to say they are illiterate. The Indian always prefers to travel third class in the railway and you cannot call him an illiterate man because he travels third. Gandhi used to travel third class.

*A.* Still I do notice quite a large number of taxi-drivers and I suppose these are not literate.

*Q.* I notice you say here that children do not attend generally unless accompanied by adults.

*A.* Yes, very seldom indeed.

*Q.* And do you advocate any classification of these films for children or for adults?

*A.* As you see in the replies that have been given the Vigilance Association are of opinion that a careful and wise classification of films which, for instance, come out to India with a certificate "To be shown to adults only" should have the same classification in India. They think, and that was the opinion expressed by the Indian members of my committee, that it would give an indication to Indian gentlemen as to whether a film is a suitable one to take their wives and children too.

*Q.* But don't you think that might be a means of advertising.....

*A.* It certainly will be at first, but I do not think it will make any difference in the long run.

*Q.* If censoring is properly done, as you say it is done by the Bengal Film Board, what is the need for such a certificate?

*A.* I suppose there are a certain number of films which deal with sex problems and that sort of thing, which while unobjectionable in themselves, create an impression on the adolescent which careful parents or guardians would not wish.

*Q.* Those above the age of 16 and below the age of 24?

*A.* About 14 to 16—that is the impressionable age.

*Q.* You would not go above that age?

*A.* I do not think so, not in this country.

*Q.* All children under 16 you would say? It is rather difficult to find the age of 14 to 16. It will land the management in a great difficulty in finding that out?

*A.* The rule only applies to children unaccompanied, and the same thing is done in England where so many more children and young people go to the cinemas unaccompanied by anybody.

*Q.* They are not prohibited?

*A.* Yes. They are turned away from those films which are marked "For adults only".

*Q.* Do you think it is a workable proposition? It may lead to trouble?

*A.* I do not think so, because so few children go *alone* to cinemas in India.

*Q.* Indian girls seldom go you say?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* If at all, Anglo-Indian girls go?

*A.* Some Anglo-Indian girls go.

*Q.* As regards boys it may introduce practical difficulties for the trade to observe these things. Don't you think it is enough if you leave it to the adults to take care of their children and you merely issue a certificate "Fit to be shown to children"?

*A.* I think that would answer the same purpose as far as we are concerned, but there I think you will find the trade objecting. If a film is marked "Fit for exhibition to children" nobody will care to go to it.

*Q.* If it is stated, "suitable for children also"?

*A.* I think it will be taken as being so innocuous that nobody will care to go and see it. There are difficulties in the way and I quite recognise them.

*Q.* You say very few children attend here and therefore this might be possible?

*A.* So few children go unaccompanied that I do not think it will have any practical difficulties. I suppose it does lead to some kind of supervision. When I was in charge of the London Women Police it was one of our duties to see that the regulations were being carried out.

*Q.* Do you see theatres also in your capacity as a member of the Vigilance Association where the actual play goes on?

*A.* I do not personally, but I think possibly some members do.

*Q.* I suppose you go to the theatres?

*A.* Yes, occasionally.

*Q.* You do not want to censor the performances of opera girls and ballet girls, high kicks.....

*A.* That is a matter largely of personal taste.

*Q.* How is it different from those scenes which you see on the screen?

*A.* I think more attention is drawn by a cinema picture.

*Q.* With regard to the adolescents whom you have in view, between the ages of 14 and 16, if they see such girls on the stage.....

*A.* I do not think the same class of entertainment is given at all as *you* see on the pictures.

*Q.* But still as regards dress or want of dress—you do notice a considerable absence of dress on these girls?

*A.* That you may notice among the audience in the theatre itself.

*Q.* There is an unfortunately growing tendency which, if I may say so with respect, I do not think is suitable for this country?

*A.* Probably not.

*Q.* You will be put down for an old conservative lady if you say so. My point is this. Don't you think these are matters to be considered by the country where they produce these things?



A. Yes, I certainly think they should. I think representations should be made periodically to the producers.

Q. It is rather hard on India to decide what is suitable and what is not suitable for the westerner. He must decide for himself what he is going to show to this country?

A. Yes. But on this particular question of certifying films for adults only—no such request has come from the Europeans at all. It has entirely come from Indians.

Q. One can understand what is being done by others being followed here in order to protect the youths of the country. From that point of view certainly any measure necessary should be taken. But if it is a question of—sometimes they may feel insulted if you tell them “Don’t dress like that.” It is not? I suppose you consider it is for amusement that people go to the theatres?

A. Yes.

Q. Not for moral lessons?

A. No.

Q. And any unduly strict censorship is likely to interfere with the popularity of the film?

A. Yes. I think the censorship has to.....

Q. Be tempered?

A. Yes.

Q. You cannot avoid love scenes or love-making scenes on the film?

A. Oh, no.

Q. Do you consider that there is a large preponderance of any undesirable scenes depicted on the films shown in this country?

A. No. I would not say a large preponderance at all.

Q. Even with the strictest system there may be lapses now and then in any human institution?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you think it is anything beyond that?

A. No.

Q. Do you think there is any difference—I put you that question because you have had experience of cinemas in England—do you think there is really any difference in the standard of the film shown here and in England?

A. I have found that the same class of films make exactly the same appeal to the audiences here and in England.

Q. Not that the Indian boys or girls.....

A. No difference whatsoever.

Q. Some people make it appear as if the Indian is a different animal from the westerner in these matters.

A. I do not find that. I think the composition of the cinema audiences, the way in which they take the film, and the kind of appeal it makes to them—it is the same in both countries.

Mr. Green: “The play’s the thing”?

A. Yes.

Chairman: Some people seem to exhibit a large amount of nervousness in showing films in this country. You must have seen comments in the press as if India and Indian people are likely to misunderstand this, that and the other.

A. Exactly the same class of comments are made in England. You will find the school authorities and the social and moral authorities always protesting against the bad influence of the cinema. I do not think there is any difference. I think the influence of the cinema is very powerful wherever it goes and I do not see any influence in the east or in the west. I do not think enough, if any, use is made of the educational class of film.....

*Q.* You would advocate a larger use of the educational class of films in this country?

*A.* It would be of such very great advantage. I understand both in France and in Italy the Government definitely subsidise certain films which are considered of general advantage for educational purposes.

*Q.* In the broad sense of the term?

*A.* Yes, not being so dull that nobody would care to see.

*Q.* If you merely make a class picture nobody will go. You would also advocate Government doing something to advance the Indian film industry?

*A.* I should say so, certainly. It has struck me in some of the more recent Indian productions which I have seen that they are so extremely interesting to European audiences that they should have a large market abroad, a bigger market really than they have in India.

*Q.* You see, the trade are afraid to show it in European quarters. We see a disinclination on the part of the trade. They are afraid that would drive away their customers.

*A.* That may be in India, but I should say that the same films which I have seen, if they were exported, would attract. I believe "The Light of Asia" had an enormous run in England.

*Q.* So they say, but not in a fashionable quarter.

*A.* That I cannot say.

*Colonel Crawford:* Would not that appeal more to cultured people and not so much to the masses in England?

*A.* Yes. Some of the plays which are filmed in a place like Agra which has an historical interest—they would be extremely interesting to a cultured audience.

*Mr. Green:* But the point of the trade is that the cultured people do not supply the box office receipts.

*Chairman:* Evidence is not very satisfactory on that point. However, India is a big market for Indian films. I do not think we need look for a market elsewhere when we have a market here.

*A.* The good ones that I have seen should have a market outside. I remember one very bad film, an Indian production, being banned. It was a short but a very foolish thing. It showed the Indian in an extraordinarily bad light.

*Q.* There are not many Indian films produced in this province?

*A.* No. I think I have seen not more than four or five.

*Colonel Crawford:* I want to ask you something on the scope of children. A lady told me that on looking at scenes shown on the cinema the children get either intensely excited or intensely depressed—her own children when she took them to a film showing Jackie Coogan surrounded by spears were so depressed and so horrified that she had to take them away from the theatre. Have you considered the matter from that point of view?

*A.* Personally I consider that children should be very sparingly taken to the cinema. That is a question for parents. When my own child was small it was never allowed to go to the pictures, never more than once a month at the outside. If you take children 3 or 4 times a week I am sure it has a harmful influence.

*Q.* You do not advocate the State stepping in to supply the slackness of the parent or guardian?

*A.* No, but I should like to see regular children's performances.

*Q.* But I understand they are not a commercial proposition.

*A.* I cannot think that if they were genuinely made interesting, if the programme was made in such a way that it was really genuinely interesting and not silly or dry—I feel sure that the school authorities and the parents will take a keen interest in what their children see and would patronise such shows. I understand that in some of the places—I cannot remember the

place for the moment—I think it is Lucknow—they have a Saturday morning performance which is very largely attended by school children.

**Q.** Has there been any experiment by the trade in that direction in Calcutta?

**A.** No, not in Calcutta.

**Q.** Do I understand you to say that you would advocate certain films being marked for children or for adults?

**A.** The Calcutta Vigilance Association, the Indian members of it (and I think the same remark was made by the two Indian members of the Bengal Board) stated that they would like to see the classification as an indication to respectable people so that they might choose whether to take their wives or children to the show or not. Whether it is practicable or not, I do not know.

**Q.** Are you satisfied with the general standard of the stories which are being shown on the films?

**A.** That is rather a difficult question to answer. I should say the general run is poor, is of a low standard. You get occasionally good films, but most of it is trash.

**Q.** Have you any suggestions as to how we might assist the trade to improve its standard?

**A.** I do not know how it could be done. As I understand it from the discussions I have had with some of the managers of the cinemas, if they want one very good picture they pay a high price for it. They have to take a block of 10 or 12 films and they have to get their money back by showing the trash. One generally finds that. You find if a very good film has had a fairly long run at one house, it is followed for the next few weeks by very inferior stuff.

**Q.** You think there is a certain amount of inferior stuff shown?

**A.** A large amount of inferior stuff. It is so inferior that sitting on the sub-committee to censor such stuff one's personal inclination is to cut it out altogether. But the Committee have to consider that the trade would be put to a heavy loss if that was done.

**Q.** Regarding educational films, would you advocate forcing exhibitors to show one reel of an educational nature during their programme?

**A.** I think it might be of great advantage. If they get really good films, of which they are really plenty if they only use them, I think they would find it would draw more children. There are a number of people who like travel pictures.

**Q.** Is the topical popular?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** That is an educational film of a sort?

**A.** Yes. It is very popular.

**Mr. Green:** I understand the Vigilance Association considers that there is a general circulation of immoral and criminally suggestive films?

**A.** That is what I have described as trash. The moral standard is low.

**Q.** But at the same time I gather it has been passed by the Bengal Board?

**A.** The Calcutta Vigilance Association has for a long time been complaining about some of the films that were shown under the Bombay certificate. There is a Bombay Vigilance Association and I think they have for a long time been wanting to get a member on to the Bombay Board.

**Q.** How does the Bombay Vigilance Association come into this? What I am trying to get at is this. The complaint is against the Bombay Board. You said that you had to pass a lot of trash here in Bengal as well?

**A.** That is not exactly what I meant to convey. I said there was a good deal of trash being shown.

**Q.** I find it a little difficult to understand whether trash is necessarily immoral and criminally suggestive?

**A.** That comes in.

**Q.** But the Association definitely say that there is a general circulation of immoral and criminally suggestive films?

**A.** That was their opinion. I am here to put forward the views of the Calcutta Vigilance Association. They had some evidence that some of the Jackie Coogan films which were shown a short time ago are definitely responsible for one or two small boys who are now incarcerated in the juvenile jail.

**Q.** On that subject do you think the Committee can legitimately be guided by the opinion of responsible police officers?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Most of the police officers hold the view that crime has not been really influenced by the cinema?

**A.** I should not think so, but it is probable. But exactly the same complaint is made in the west as well.

**Q.** With regard to criminal films. I gather that as long as the police are satisfied that certain films are not criminally suggestive, your Association is also satisfied?

**A.** I don't think they would necessarily be.

**Q.** You said just now that the Committee would be wisely guided by the opinion of the police in this matter?

**A.** But now you are asking me what the Calcutta Vigilance Association would say. My instructions are that there are certain criminally suggestive films and also immoral films in circulation, and our Association would like to see a higher standard imposed.

**Q.** Nevertheless your Association considers that the Bengal Board is doing its duty satisfactorily?

**A.** I think so.

**Q.** You have heard, as a member of the Board, the questions I put this morning about the same subject, the difference in moral standards between the two Boards?

**A.** After seeing a considerable number of films both as a censor and as a member of this committee, I find it very difficult to distinguish.

**Q.** Are you aware that some of the Bengal films have been suspended in Bombay?

**A.** I have heard that.

**Q.** Have you seen "The Merry Widow" film?

**A.** No.

**Q.** Don't you think it possible that just as Bengal films have been banned in Bombay, similarly Bengal also might ban some of the films certified by other provinces?

**A.** It is quite possible. But I have myself heard it said by the managers of two companies here that they would always prefer to have the films censored for the first time in Bombay.

**Q.** Is it possibly because the Bengal Board is too severe that they have to go to Bombay first?

**A.** That is the suggestion.

**Q.** If the Bombay Board is relatively lax, why don't all the films go to Bombay for censoring?

**A.** That I can't say.

**Q.** It is interesting to note that the proportion of the films censored in Bombay and Calcutta bears a very close resemblance to the total amount of films imported. Don't you think we are justified in assuming that there is very little difference in the standards adopted?

**A.** I expect there is very little difference.

**Q.** Is it not natural that if a film with a certificate from another Board is objected to in Calcutta, it comes vividly to the notice of the Board?

**A.** That is so.

**Q.** Similarly if a Bengal film is suspended in Bombay, it apparently shows how lax the Bengal Board is?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Your Association definitely does say that the Bombay certificate is not worth very much. Can you cite any specific films?

**A.** I believe they have attached a list to the official statement. They said they were going to. If they have not done so, I shall ask them to send you a list.

**Q.** Because definite examples would certainly carry greater weight. I gather that your Association is in close touch with the Bombay Association?

**A.** Yes, they correspond on all these matters.

**Q.** Could you tell me whether that Association told you about or film called "What Happened to Jones"?

**A.** I do not remember the film.

**Q.** I suppose you saw it?

**A.** I don't remember.

**Q.** In your answer to question No. 37A, you say that the safe guards at present are inadequate. Could you expand that and tell us what the Association has in mind?

**A.** I think they refer to the question of films which have been banned by one Board in one province and shown in another province.

**Q.** The Act gives power to any Board to suspend a film passed in another province. Had they in mind that if once a film is banned the ban should in no circumstances be reviewed?

**A.** I think they thought that if a film were banned in any part of the world it should not be shown anywhere else. They say that they think that a film which has been banned by any Board should not be shown anywhere else, without an appeal to the Central Authority.

**Q.** I take it that a film that is put up for censorship and is refused a licence may be re-submitted to that same Board in an amended form and a licence may then be obtained?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Is it fair to ask you whether you would personally object to a film which was refused a certificate by one Board again going up for a certificate with some radical alterations in it to another Board?

**A.** I think it should be submitted in its new guise to the Board that first banned it. If a film is shown to one Board and it is objected to and if it is completely revised, I think it should be shown to that same Board which first banned it, before it is taken somewhere else.

**Q.** I think it is not competent for any other Board to refuse to inspect any film tendered for examination. But you suggest that power should be given for the second Board to refer the film to the first Board, instead of inspecting it?

**A.** That would add to the safeguards certainly.

*Letter dated Calcutta, the 2nd February 1928, from Mrs. Stanley of the Calcutta Vigilance Association.*

I beg to forward the list of films objected to by the Calcutta Vigilance Association, mentioned in my evidence.

Scaramouche.  
Sea Hawk.  
Cohens & Kellys.  
Kiki.

White Rose.  
Old Loves and New.  
Merry Widow.

**Oral Evidence of Mr. J. N. BANNERJEE, Assistant Inspector of Films, Calcutta, on Tuesday, the 13th December 1927.**

*Chairman:* Mr. Bannerjee, you are the Assistant Inspector of Films here?

A. Yes.

Q. For how long have you been here?

A. For the last three years.

Q. Do you belong to the police force?

A. No. I am employed by the Board of Censors.

Q. What are you duties?

A. (1) To censor Indian films. (2) To be present from time to time with the Inspector at censoring in order to help him from an Indian point of view. (3) To visit the cinema theatres in the city and see that the performances comply in all particulars with the Act and rules, such as exhibition of the trailer certificate, non-display of portions objected to, etc. (4) To pay surprise visits to all cinema theatres to see that only licensed operators are employed to handle the machinery and also to inspect operating boxes, and licensed premises in general and report on contraventions of laws and regulations, if any. (5) To visit peripatetic cinema shows in and around Calcutta to see that the provisions of the Act and rules are being complied with and report breaches of the same. (6) To report any case that comes to notice of a cinema show being held in and around Calcutta without a licence. (7) to see that the rules relating to the storage of films are observed. (8) to render help in conducting cases in court, and (9) to examine candidates for being qualified as operators.

Q. Do you visit all the cinemas?

A. Yes, I visit all the theatres both in the Indian quarter and in the European quarter. I do it almost every day.

Q. What sort of people generally go to the cinema in the European quarter. I mean Chowringhee side?

A. Many Europeans and educated Indians, college students and pleaders and other educated classes.

Q. Do many of the uneducated and illiterate classes go there?

A. They generally go to cinemas where serials are shown. There is a theatre in Corporation Street where they used to show serials. Now they don't show these serials, but formerly most of the uneducated and illiterate classes used to visit this theatre—the Albion Theatre. Now they show Indian films also, and only last week they showed a film called "Incarnation" or "Punarjanma."

Q. Do you mean to say that in the European quarters serial films are not shown?

A. No.

Q. What are the cinemas which you will class as in the European quarters?

A. The Picture House. The Elphinstone Picture Palace, Mudans Theatre and Palace of Variety and the Globe Theatre.

Q. The Alfred theatre?

A. It is now showing dramas. Ordinarily dramas are staged there; they have taken out a licence from us because sometimes they show some cinema scenes as part of the play concerned.

Q. The Central Theatre?

A. They show serials. It is in the Indian quarter.

Q. The Corinthian?

A. It is a pure stage, it is not a cinema house at all.

Q. The Crown Cinema?

A. That is in the Indian quarter and they show Indian films.

Q. The Elphinstone Picture Palace?

A. They show only western films.

Q. The Empress?

A. They show Indian and western films.

Q. The Imperial?

A. Now-a-days they are showing only Indian films.

Q. The Kidderpore Cinema?

A. Generally they show old western films and also serials.

Q. Madan Theatre?

A. They show purely western films.

Q. The Picture House?

A. Purely western.

Q. The Ripon Theatre?

A. They show both Indian and western.

Q. The Globe?

A. Only western.

Q. The Purna Theatre?

A. Old films are shown there.

Q. I understand there is going to be started another Picture House called the Aurora Picture House?

A. I have no positive information on this point.

Q. There is going to come into existence another called the Majestic?

A. They have not yet applied for the licence. I believe it will be ready by next week. It is near Dhurumtolla, which is a business quarter, and it belongs to one Mr. Raval, who is the Manager of the Kinema Arts Studio.

Q. Now, how many Indian films have been produced in this province?

A. I have got a list of the films produced here. (The list was handed in by the witness). Those marked with a cross in pencil are made in Bombay.

Q. In how many years were these produced?

A. That is not exactly known. Madans have produced 61, and they have also taken topical films. Sometimes the Globe and the Aurora Film Co., also take topical and other films. The Aurora have already produced about 14 films. "Krishna Sakha" was produced by them. The Taj Mahal Co. is now abolished and the Indo-British is not working now.

Q. How many studios are now working?

A. Madans, Auroras and the Indian Kinema Arts and also the Lakshmi Vilas. The last concern has produced one film which has not yet been censored.

Q. Are the Bombay films popular here?

A. Those dealing with mythology are always popular.

Q. Are any of the Bombay social dramas shown here?

A. "Spinning Wheel" or "The Charka" was very popular here. No other social dramas have been shown here.

Q. Do you think they are equally popular like the Bengal films?

A. Not to that extent, because the Bombay made films have no sub-titles in Bengali; moreover there are differences in customs.

Q. Do you think this difference in customs matters very much here?

A. Yes. Now-a-days there is a social film depicted from Bankim Chandra's play and it is very popular here.

Q. Do you go to the studios yourself?

A. Yes.

Q. We heard of a studio yesterday from the Director of Industries that started some years ago. The Taj Mahal Film Company.

A. They closed down long ago. Mr. Laharry of the Globe was connected with it.

Q. Do you think the people are going to take an interest in this industry in this province—the Bengalis?

A. Yes.

Q. What are the difficulties?

A. There are many difficulties. They are not getting proper heroines, and moreover they have not got the money. Whenever they have started companies, they have failed.

Q. How many cases of failure are there?

A. Three or four cases of failure, e.g., the Russa Theatre, managed purely by Bengalis and they lost a considerable amount. So nobody cares to go in for it.

Q. I know. But the Purna Theatre is now being run.

A. But before that it was the Russa Theatre.

Q. But what is wrong? They are only exhibiting films now?

A. The thing is they have not got the films. They have to depend on Madans and other importers.

Q. You mean they are independent of Madan? They don't get their pictures through him? So they find it difficult to get Indian pictures? Those who are independent of Madans find it difficult? There was another theatre which I thought was independent of Madans.—The Globe. They are doing well. They are taking films from England.

A. Purna find it difficult to get not only Indian but western films. They have to depend on the Globe and Madans. It is only after they have been shown in their own theatres that they part with them, if they please.

Q. There are no other distributors here? What about the Universals?

A. In Calcutta they stock only old films and one kind of film.

Q. They have not got an agent here?

A. They have.

Q. But only Universal productions they are getting here?

A. They don't get the productions in which Madans are interested.

Q. They do get from Pathes? Has he got an agent here?

A. No, Sir. Pathe's agents are Madans.

Q. Well, you think that the theatre suffers from lack of funds?

A. Yes.

Q. Why should they not be able to get it themselves? I won't trouble you about that however. They will be able to tell us better.

What do you think is the influence of the cinema on the people? You are frequently attending there. Do you think it has a bad influence?

A. I don't think so.

Q. Were films passed by the Bombay Board shown here? Do you think they have a bad influence at all?

A. I don't think so, if they have been properly censored.

Q. Either on the youth or any other class whatever?

A. I don't think so.

Q. Did you hear of any objection to films shown here from anyone—from the public or the audience?

A. Yes, whenever they don't like anything they send objections to the Board's Secretary.

Q. Have there been many objections?

A. Not many.

Q. Do you hear any objections among the audience itself when you are there, such as "look at that dirty film they are showing"?

A. Yes.



Q. Either by Europeans or Indians?

A. No. Whenever we hear of any, action is taken.

Q. I suppose it is part of your duty to report. Have you had any occasion to report such cases?

A. Yes, and we cut them.

Q. I know, but that is before it has been shown.

A. No Sir.

Q. After it has been shown on the screen have you found any objection?

A. Yes, we have taken action. We have cut some films passed by the Bombay Board.

Q. How many like that?

A. From time to time.

Q. Are they not censored here before exhibition?

A. No. If the Bengal Board find an objectionable scene they cut it down.

Q. I am asking you about films shown after censoring.

A. I am referring to films to which objection is taken after being censored in Bombay. There is no objection after we have censored them.

Q. How often do you think Bombay films were objected to here?

A. Frequently.

Q. How many cases do you know?

A. I cannot tell you but I can give you the particulars, if you like.

Q. One a year?

A. Five or six.

Mr. Green: We understand from the Board 14—that is, 2 a year.

Chairman: Probably that is not part of your duty.

A. If I see anything objectionable, I bring it to notice.

Q. But have you done so in any case?

A. I cannot recollect at the moment.

Q. You simply think they might have done so. Now let me see the films which are sent here for censoring. The senior inspector and you both of you see every film?

A. The Senior Inspector sees all films. I see Indian ones along with him.

Q. You see the Indian films?

A. Yes, as well as anything where he thinks my assistance is needed, from the Indian point of view.

Q. Does he take your assistance very often like that?

A. At least I have been ordered to go.

Q. Does he take your assistance very often? Supposing a hundred films are seen by him, in how many does he take your assistance?

A. I have to sit along with him at least one day in the week.

Q. How often does he sit to view the films?

A. He sits every day. Two hours at least.

Q. On what matters does he consult you?

A. Anything about Indian concerns.

Q. Give me an instance.

A. For instance, showing scenes showing a *jogi* or depicting any Muhammadans, or anything like that, anything degrading or offensive to Orientals, in which he wants to know what the Indian feeling will be on that matter.

Q. And the Indian pictures which you see, you say it is part of your duties to see them. Does the inspector also see Indian pictures?

A. He does.

*Q.* Are there many occasions when the communal question comes in?—whether it will be pleasing to the Muhammadan, or pleasing to the Hindu? Are there many occasions when such questions arise?

*A.* Not many.

*Q.* Either in Indian or in western films? Of course they won't arise in western films. You have given us 60 or 70 cases of Indian films. Have you had any trouble such as whether it is not pleasing to the Muhammadans or others?

*A.* We have taken action to prohibit the film about the Sikh procession.

*Q.* That is more or less on the ground of political expediency.

*A.* Yes. Otherwise there is nothing.

*Q.* Except for these two things mentioned here there are no other occasions on which the communal question arose?

*A.* Not to my knowledge.

*Q.* I suppose you are satisfied with the moral standard of the films shown here?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* You don't think there is anything objectionable?

*Mr. Green:* I gather from you that the Bombay films shown here have no Bengali sub-titles?

*A.* No, Sir.

*Q.* If these films had Bengali sub-titles do you think they would be more popular?

*A.* I do not think they would be more popular.

*Q.* Do you think they would be as popular?

*A.* They won't be as popular as the Bengal films.

*Q.* Don't you think it might interest Europeans and the very intelligent Bengali audience to see the habits and dress of another part of India?

*A.* I would not like to express an opinion. Moreover, they often see, so they are not very interested in it.

*Q.* We saw a picture last night "Durgesh Nandini" that was not a Bengali subject. Is that a popular film?

*A.* Very popular.

*Mr. Neogy:* That is a Bengali subject: the scene is laid in Burdwan.

*Mr. Green:* But you don't profess to say that the Emperor Akbar was a Bengali, do you? Or Man Singh?

*Mr. Neogy:* As a matter of fact, the story relates to Bengal, the principal incident.

*Mr. Green:* But the dress is not Bengali. Was Man Singh a Bengali?

*A.* He was a Rajput. There are Rajputs and Pathans. He came to fight a Pathan rebel in Bengal.

*Q.* My point is that it was obviously a very popular film. It may have had some slight Bengli interest but the dress and the persons represented there and presumably the habits were not Bengali. Nevertheless it was very popular.

*A.* The thing is everybody knows who they were and what the thing is about.

*Q.* We saw a film in Bombay representing Rajput history—a semi-historical play and the persons represented there were Rajputs. That was very popular in Bombay. If that came across to Calcutta and had Bengali titles, do you think it would be very popular?

*A.* Not so popular as films produced in Bengal.

*Q.* It is a question of local patriotism?

*A.* I think so.

*Colonel Crawford:* Do you think the western picture would be better understood if it had Bengali captions?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you think it would make it more popular?

A. I think so.

Q. They can understand it without being able to read the captions?

A. Most of the Bengalis at least understand English.

Mr. Green: That is, the class that go to the cinemas know what it is.

Colonel Crawford: Now, you are quite convinced that in Bengal they would not want to see a film coming from Bombay?

A. Yes.

Q. Is "Alladin" shown here?

A. Yes, that was shown here.

Q. Was that popular?

A. At the time it was popular, as there was no other Indian film here.

Q. It is not so much a question of the dress as of the nature of the story?

A. Yes.

Mr. Neogy: You have read Rajastan. Supposing some of the well-known heroic exploits that are described there were filmed in Bombay, don't you think they would be popular in Bengal? Some of the well-known stories which we have already read of in our text books, don't you think they would be popular?

A. Some of them would be popular.

Q. That would be popular here? I am speaking of subjects which have not been treated by any Bengali author so far.

A. Yes. They would like to see the scenery.

Q. Is there going to be any prejudice simply because the film is not produced in Bengal?

A. No, it depends upon the subject. As for instance, "Incarnation" was not taken here, it was taken in the Central Provinces. That was very popular here. Because they like the scenery and other things. And the dress also—Rajputs and others they understand things.

Q. Now, in the case of "Durgesh Nandini," isn't it the case that the picture is based on one of the most popular novels, and any film produced on any book of the author of that work would be popular in Bengal?

A. Yes.

Q. Did you have to see "Durgesh Nandini" in your capacity as inspector before the thing was certified?

A. Yes.

Q. And you were accompanied by the inspector also?

A. Yes.

Q. Did you take any objection to anything there?

A. Yes, we took objection. Scenes were cut out which wounded Muhammadan feeling.

Q. Was that your suggestion?

A. Yes. The film was altered so as to suit both the Muhammadans and the Hindus, so as not to wound Muhammadan feeling. And before we passed it, it was shown to a Muhammadan gentleman, a Bengali and a European.

Q. They all approved of it?

A. Because there might be some doubt.

Q. Now, did you have anything to do with the film known as "Prafulla" which is based upon the drama of that particular name?

A. It has been passed.

Q. I know. Now when a drama which has been staged in Bengal is filmed, do you generally compare the two, that is to say the manner in which

the subject is treated on the stage and the manner in which the subject is treated on the film?

A. Yes. What I mean is if we have seen the play or have the book, we compare; otherwise not.

Q. And provided the screen edition tallies with the stage edition you don't generally object?

A. We do not take much objection in regard to differences, if there are any.

Q. I want your reasons.

A. On the stage momentarily they can show something. But here on the screen there is a permanent record. Moreover, in the theatre they show in one place but this thing goes all over the country. So we have to be a little more careful and strict in the case of the film.

Q. Have you got any definite instructions from the board in regard to this point?

A. No. The Board however always appreciate any investigation in the matter of comparison between the stage play and the screen play.

Q. So you think that as the audience is wider in the case of the film, it is not enough that they should faithfully reproduce a play which is being staged in Calcutta. You want to be a little more strict?

A. Yes.

Q. Now what were you before you became inspector?

A. I was in the office.

Q. In that very office?

A. Yes, the board's office.

Q. In what capacity?

A. As a clerk.

Q. How long did you serve in that office?

A. Since the board was organised.

Q. And when this appointment was created you were taken on?

A. Yes.

Q. Well, in your capacity as clerk, had you any great experience of film censoring, or used you to go to them?

A. Oh, yes, I used to go with an Inspector and had my training under him for two years.

Q. Before that who used to go?

A. The Inspector used to go.

Sir Haroon Jaffar: Is it true that even the whole film is not exhibited before the censor.

A. That is not true.

Q. Are you sure?

A. Yes.

Q. We are told that after the film is shown, some 400 or 500 feet are tacked on to the film which has been shown to the censor. Is it true?

A. We see from the beginning to the end.

Q. You don't leave it halfway?

A. No, Sir.

Q. We are also told that after certification new parts are added or excised. Do such things happen?

A. No. It is my duty to see whether they add anything or not.

Q. Besides censoring what is your duty?

A. It is my duty to go round and inspect places. I have given a list of my duties. That is the reason why my post was created.

Q. You also say among the duties you have to perform you have to see films certified in the other provinces are fit for local exhibition. You see to this?

A. Yes.

Q. It is your duty to do so?

A. Yes. Also a member of the board goes there.

Q. All the members go there?

A. Yes. By rotation.

Q. The President sometimes?

A. Yes.

Q. The Secretary—the Deputy Commissioner? All of them. The lady too?

A. Yes.

**Written Statement of Mr. S. N. GUHA, Expert and Director, Bengal Educational Film Co., Calcutta, dated the 31st October 1927.**

INTRODUCTORY.

1. Yes.

GENERAL.

2. (a) (1) 50 per cent. of the students, clerks and young merchants.

(2) 50 per cent. of the illiterate classes in the mill area only. The increase of such attendance depends on the kind of pictures. This is true for all Bengal.

(b) As to my experience of the whole of Bengal, it is difficult to give any correct idea of the composition, as it varies according to the locality and the nature of picture.

(c) The percentage is insignificant.

PART I.

*Film industry in India.*

3. Indian Mythological pictures and good foreign dramas.

4. No. Reason being absence of good kind of picture.

5. No. Because there is lack of financial support to encourage production, there are only a few.

(a) No.

(b) Yes.

(c) More profitable, pictures like "Jaidev," "Krishna Kanta's Will," "Krishna Charit," etc.

6. (a) Yes, by all means.

(b) Historical and Mythological.

(1) Historical Novels and fiction.

(2) Mythological.

7. I have no knowledge.

8. (a) Not at all.

(b) Government financial help to *bona-fide* and legitimate producers and putting more restrictions to indent of all foreign made pictures.

9. No, because releasing houses in London are trying to use India as sphere for monopoly.

10. Yes, the trade is benefitted by that, but the public is not.

11. No, the foreign producers should have their releasing houses in the capitals of India.

12. Not much.

13. Raw films, etc., and all materials and implements needed for producing pictures should be allowed duty free entry into India and to compensate for the loss of revenue thus incurred, duty on foreign cinema pictures entering India should be enhanced.

14. Yes, to a great extent, though there is very little demand for the same at present.

15. Yes, very much so, because natural scenes, light, subjects and themes are plentiful here.

16. Not quite so yet, but if the Government helps, such condition may be produced soon. I should suggest that the Government should allot a sum of Rs. Five lacs every year for a period of ten years to help legitimate producers and producing concerns.

17. Yes, under proper encouragement and guarantee by Government.

18. Yes, for answer see No. 16.

19. In India the cost is about one-fourth of that in America or England.

20. (a) Yes, I think it is quite justifiable as it has the greatest educational value.

(b) Yes, jute cess, tea cess, etc., duty on Indian Exporting products.

21. Difficult to answer the question.

#### *Films of the British Commonwealth.*

22—23. (a) Let not the Empire production slogan be used as an excuse for preferential tariff.

(b) Let each part of the Empire develop its own cinema production to the best of its ability, as India can ill afford to go into any reciprocity scheme until her own production has been brought up to the same level as that of any other part of the Empire.

(c) The Government of India should encourage and help cinema production in India for a period of at least 15 years, allot at least Rs. 5 lacs a year or helping the indigenous concerns on terms best calculated by the Board of Censors for a period of at least 10 years and then, if it is considered beneficial to the interest of the country, by a special Commission appointed for the purpose, join any *bona fide* Empire production scheme.

(d) Any step taken to join any Empire production scheme before fulfilling the clauses mentioned above will be suicidal to the country.

#### **PART II.**

#### *Social Aspects and Control.*

24. (a) No.

(b) No.

(c) Any picture keeping true to the facts or truth is harmless, as knowledge can never be harmful to anyone at any time.

(d) (1) Yes.

(2) Yes.

(e) No.

(f) Question does not arise.

25. No, because knowledge of the customs and habits of a nation is necessary for proper understanding.

26. (a) Yes.

(b) No occasion has arisen yet.

27. (a) No. The uneducated in India are not un-intelligent, I have had no occasion yet to suspect any misunderstanding.

(b) Yes, "Soul Adrift" and a few missionary pictures produced by British companies in India.

28 No knowledge is harmful.

29. I don't see any need for such a step.

30. No.

31. No. Public opinion is the best censor, as no exhibitor will exhibit a film if it does not pay.

32. No. Because it is too much under Police control.

33. (a) Yes.

(b) Yes.

(c) Yes.

34. (a) (1) Yes, for uniformity of censorship throughout India.

(2) Yes, if there be no branch offices in the different Provincial Capitals.

(3) At no time should the composition of such board have less than two-third of its members Indian and the board should at no time be under influence of British Parliament or Whitehall.

(4) Delhi.

(b) Yes.

(c) A Central Board should be the real legislative and directing body, while the provincial boards should be subordinate to the central board and working under its direction; such conditions are possible only if the secretaries of the provincial boards be in the employ of the central board and not controlled by the local Government.

(d) The Central Board must finance the local board as the central board is the final recipient of all money coming from censor.

35. (a) No.

(b) Yes.

36. (a) No, a well educated man with foreign and Indian experience, good social status and at the same time authors and artists if possible.

(b) No.

37. (a) Yes

(b) No.

38. Yes, the picture "The Life of Lord Buddha" was objected to in Burma.

39. No.

40. Advertisements should never be allowed to exaggerate.

41. Not much.

42. Yes, asking for their report of grievances at an interval of reasonable period.

43. (a) Yes, specially on the export.

(b) Because anti-Indian pictures are made in India and exported out by interested parties, religious and political, for propaganda purposes.

(c) Foreigners should be prohibited from making any pictures in India without the permission of the board.

44. To a great extent.

45. (a) No.

(b) Yes, but not by public.

**\*Oral Evidence of Mr. S. N. GUHA, B.Sc. (U. S. A.), Expert and Director, Bengal Educational Film Company, Ltd., on Wednesday, the 14th December 1927.**

*Chairman:* You are now the Principal of the Agricultural School at Chinsurah?

A. Yes.

**Q.** Is it run by the Government?

**A.** No, it is not; it is partly financed by a donation of the Government but run by the Committee.

**Q.** How long has the school been going on?

**A.** It was started by the Government; it was under Government for about 2 years; after that it was unoccupied for a year and a half, then the Committee took it up.

**Q.** Now you are in charge of it?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** And you are a B.Sc. of the United States?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** You spent 10 years in cinema producing in Los Angeles?

**A.** Quite right.

**Q.** You were employed in the.....

**A.** Metro Film Corporation.

**Q.** Of which Mr. Mooser is the representative?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Were you employed there for 10 years?

**A.** No, not in one studio. I have worked for all the companies there, but for the major part of the time with the Metro.

**Q.** You were a paid producer for them?

**A.** Yes, sometimes actor, sometimes scenario writer, sometimes producer.

**Q.** You have acted, you have produced and you have also been a director, so you have experience in all these three lines?

**A.** I hope so.

**Q.** You mean to say those people producing in the United States engaged your services on a monthly pay?

**A.** The pay there is mostly on a weekly basis but they contract for so many months.

**Q.** When did you return to India?

**A.** In 1922, March 9th.

**Q.** And since then you have been trying to float a company for the Bengal Educational Film Company.

**A.** Not quite so. I was in the Publicity Department of the Government of Bengal producing pictures for them.

**Q.** In what Department? Publicity work in connection with health?

**A.** Everything. There was a department called the Publicity Department at that time.

**Mr. Green:** Does it no longer exist?

**A.** No longer.

**Chairman:** And you produced pictures for the Bengal Government?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Where did you produce them?

**A.** In Calcutta.

**Q.** Did you write the plot yourself? What was your function?

**A.** I wrote the plot, selected the actors and actresses, selected the subject, cut it, framed it, and projected it.

**Q.** Are you also a camera man?

**A.** I am a camera man also.

**Q.** So you seem to know every bit of the trade?

**A.** I spent 10 years in it.

**Sir Haroon Jaffer:** Master of all!



A. I don't say master of all.

*Chairman:* Your experience is very valuable to us. You say the cost of production in this country is comparatively small compared with the cost of production in America or in England.

A. Much smaller.

Q. And that foreign pictures are cheaper for the exhibitor than Indian pictures.

A. I cannot say it is cheaper, there are not enough pictures.

Q. No, but as a matter of fact are not foreign pictures cheaper to the exhibitor than Indian pictures?

A. The reason being.....

Q. Never mind the reason. Is it not a fact?

A. It is a fact.

Q. Can you tell us approximately how much cheaper they are?

A. It depends very much on the quality of the picture.

Q. I mean having regard to the general quality of pictures shown here. I do not mean first class pictures. Take the average Indian picture shown here and the average Western pictures shown here in this country. You go yourself to the cinema frequently?

A. Quite often?

Q. And you have got a free pass as an expert in the line?

A. Quite so.

Q. So you go to the theatre almost—how often?

A. As often as I can make the time.

Q. So I may take it you go very often.

A. Quite so.

Q. And you are in touch with the exhibitors?

A. Yes, I am. I think it is one-third cheaper.

Q. Foreign pictures on an average are 33 per cent. cheaper than Indian pictures, although the cost of producing an Indian picture according to you is less.

A. Yes, less.

Q. Now I notice here in your prospectus of the Bengal Educational Film Company that you calculate to produce an educational picture of 7,000 feet at a cost of not more than Rs. 8,000, that is, you think the average cost is Re. 1 per foot. Does that include overhead charges?

A. It includes everything.

*Mr. Green:* It is for the finished picture?

A. Yes, for the first copy of the positive.

*Mr. Green:* Other copies will be much cheaper?

A. Yes.

*Chairman:* I mean if you produce a picture—for instance, supposing you had the necessary funds to produce pictures here, you will be able to produce them on an average at about Re. 1 per foot?

A. Yes, educational pictures.

Q. What about amusement pictures?

A. They will cost from Rs. 2 to Rs. 4 a foot.

*Mr. Green:* What is the reason?

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* Why so much more?

A. The things that are needed for educational pictures are available everywhere; you don't have to make anything; whereas for amusement pictures you have to make your sets.

Q. And you want more expensive actors?

A. Yes.

*Chairman*: Do you think it will cost as much as Rs. 2 to Rs. 4 a foot?

A. Oh, yes.

Q. But we heard in Bombay of some social drama pictures and mythological pictures which cost Rs. 15,000 on an average for anything up to 10,000 feet.

A. I think it was about a film nearly 7,000 feet long that they were talking.

Q. Well, 7,000 to 8,000 feet.

A. That makes it Rs. 2.

Q. But you said Rs. 2 to Rs. 4.

A. Rs. 2 is the minimum; and that will make a fourth rate picture.

Q. In technique or in what way?

A. In everything, in acting, production and so on.

Q. So if you want a really first class picture you will have to spend about Rs. 4 a foot. Even if you have an initial expenditure on a well equipped studio? Supposing you spend about 5 lakhs of rupees in equipping a studio and you produce pictures there, do you think it will cost you about Rs. 4 a foot for good pictures to be produced?

A. The cost will be the same, only the efficiency will be greater.

Q. But if educational films or agricultural films or public health films were to be produced they could be produced at Re. 1 a foot?

A. About that.

Q. We have heard it stated that some agricultural films, excluding overhead charges, were only 2 to 3 annas a foot.

A. Even the raw negative and positive cost double that; it is not possible.

*Mr. Green*: I understand the raw negative costs about 1½ annas per foot?

A. More than that.

Q. I believe you can get it down to Rs. 38 per reel. Kodaks, Agfa (the German firm) are down to Rs. 44 per negative and Rs. 25 per positive.

A. But the durability of Agfa is only 6 months.

Q. Are not they as good as Kodaks?

A. No. Kodaks last 3 years without even looking at.

Q. Kodak prices are the same, I understand?

A. No, they are much higher.

*Chairman*: Now supposing Government or somebody else were to establish a studio for producing educational and public utility films, what will be the initial expense and what will be the recurring cost? You understand what we have in mind? Supposing for propaganda purposes the Government establishes a studio, or somebody else establishes a studio, what do you think will be the initial cost and the recurring cost?

A. The initial cost will be about Rs. 30,000.

Q. You can have a good studio for that?

A. Good enough for educational films.

Q. Public health, agricultural methods and implements, industry and purely educational films?

A. Yes, purely educational films.

*Mr. Green*: Excluding the cost of the land?

A. Not including the cost of the land which will be taken on lease. I counted on this basis. Everywhere there are places, bagans and buildings and lands which you can take on as many years' lease as you like.

*Chairman*: You think an initial outlay of Rs. 50,000 would be ample?

A. Yes, if you take the land along with it.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer*: Including artificial lighting?

A. Yes.

Q. And then what will be the running cost? Of course, each department will have its own experts to write the plot, so what you want is a good director to follow the instructions given. You won't need actors.

A. Not very much.

Q. Developing, printing and all that will have to be carried out.

A. Rs. 1,500 to Rs. 2,000 a month.

Q. With an expert in charge?

A. Yes, with an expert in charge.

Q. What was your estimate here for your company?

A. It was floated for 5 lakhs.

Q. What was the necessity for 5 lakhs?

A. Because though it is an educational film company in name, it means producing commercial pictures also.

Q. It was not purely for educational pictures; you wanted to produce amusement pictures also?

A. Yes.

Q. For that you wanted the extra money?

A. Yes.

Q. Now supposing any authority were to import experts; you want experts here from outside; I don't mean for ever but I mean on a short term contract; experts for photography and what else?

A. Photography mostly.

Q. A camera man?

A. A camera man.

Q. And in what other direction?

A. As I see the direction done in India, I would suggest that foreign experts are very necessary for that purpose.

Q. Photography, direction; in what other direction will an expert from outside be necessary?

A. Well, if it is to be a first class affair there should be someone in the developing department also?

*Colonel Crawford:* In the laboratory?

A. Yes, in the laboratory, someone who knows the colouring of the films also.

*Chairman:* So you need to have 3 experts at least who are either foreigners or have had the requisite foreign training.

A. Requisite foreign training is the very best thing.

Q. And one who understands Indian conditions. And if you cannot get him you can certainly get assistance afterwards.

A. Quite so.

Q. Now supposing such a man were in charge of a studio like that,—supposing Government established a studio and had three experts on their staff for producing educational films; supposing you are a producer in the market and you avail yourself of their services during their spare time on nominal terms or commercial terms, do you think that would be useful to the industry?

A. It is a very difficult question to answer because both parties may be busy at the same time.

Q. You mean to find time, that is your difficulty? But it will be of use to the industry if the expert's time can be spared.

A. Yes, if it can be spared.

Q. As an expert adviser?

A. Quite so.

**Q.** Another question which I wish to ask you is this. Supposing Government went to the expense of setting up a good studio with all modern equipments, and supposing the time of the studio was not fully occupied in purely educational work, could the facilities in that studio be availed of by the producers of the ordinary film?

**A.** I doubt it.

**Q.** You mean they won't have the necessary scenery and all that?

**A.** Not only that, but the commercial producer will be pretty afraid of a Government concern.

**Q.** On account of the natural fear or distrust of the Government?

**A.** Call it in any way.

**Q.** Supposing you had a man who thinks he can trust Government? Some of us do.....

**A.** Commercial pictures?

**Q.** I mean commercial pictures to be produced by any man who wants to produce entertainment pictures. Could he not avail himself of the advantages of a studio like that?

**A.** Provided everything is there.

**Q.** But for the distrust? We know we have our own distrust of the Government. I am not talking on political grounds but as a practical proposition.

**A.** He may do so, but for the present conditions.....

**Q.** You mean unless they are in the good books of Government. You mean his pictures will be taboo, he will become a suspect?

**A.** Yes, he will be taken to be a propaganda agent of Government.

**Q.** You think he would have to be under the sway of the Government influence?

**A.** Yes.

**Mr. Green:** If India were completely under an Indian Government would the same objection hold?

**A.** That is different.

**Chairman:** Your objection is more because of the political bias and tone which may be introduced into the pictures. You may not be as free an agent? Is that your objection?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** If you wish to use that studio you will put it on terms and conditions?

**A.** Not exactly that. If any commercial man will take advantage of a Government studio like that, the public will have in their mind that it may be a subtle form of Government propaganda.

**Mr. Green:** How will the public know that it has been produced in the Government studio?

**A.** The man will have to admit that.

**Q.** He will say, such and such a production, the producer so and so. You do not say where the studio is?

**A.** The nationalist papers will not be quite silent in the matter.

**Chairman:** Yes, I know they distrust people for all and sundry reasons. Barring that, you think it would be useful to the industry?

**A.** A model studio ought to be.

**Q.** Have you been in Germany?

**A.** Not very long, only a very short time, and I cannot say much about it.

**Q.** Do you know what they do for producing these educational films in other countries? Do you know whether any Government does anything in that direction?

**A.** America is doing something. Japan is doing something on these lines.

**Q.** Have you been to Japan?

A. Yes.

Q. We hear that only in the last five years Japan is moving forwards in the film industry. When were you in Japan?

A. Once in 1906 and another time in 1921.

Q. At that time they were importing more than 90 per cent. of their films.

A. Quite so. Their condition was as it is in India now.

Q. For the last five years they have put forth some effort. Of course, you are not familiar with the conditions there and I won't trouble you with that. Can you tell us from your knowledge whether the American Government does not do anything for educational films?

A. Yes, every State does something.

Q. Every State has got its studio?

A. No. They give the private agencies contracts for making so many pictures.

Q. They get them made?

A. Yes.

Q. On the usual terms on which you and I can get films produced?

A. Yes.

Q. That is not what I have in mind. Has any Government subsidy or Government aid been given in America for producing educational films?

A. No.

Q. Commercial people produce it to order?

A. Yes.

Mr. Green: Have you any idea of what commercial companies charge for it?

A. The least is 5 dollars a foot.

Q. For educational films the least cost is five dollars a foot?

A. Yes.

Chairman: Working into rupees how much does it come to?

A. £1 a foot.

Mr. Green: Rs. 13 or 14?

A. Yes.

Chairman: What about commercial films?

A. The least is eight dollars a foot.

Q. You mean amusement pictures?

A. Yes.

Q. So that the difference in cost of production between the two countries is enormous?

A. Absolutely no question about that. They pay one million dollars a year for their actors.

Q. If you had the necessary equipment and necessary training here you could produce pictures of first class value for nearly one-tenth or one-fifth of the cost at least?

A. About one-fourth of the cost.

Q. And what about pictures produced in England?

A. It is a bit less than it costs in America. Very nearly 25 per cent. less.

Q. But I have been told that British pictures are more costly than American pictures in this country.

A. There is no supply and demand.

Q. The British have not got the necessary outlet for their productions?

A. It is dependent on the patriotism of the English people.

**Q.** That is why the British pictures are not able to sell at a cheaper price because they have not got a large number of theatres which America has for its own productions?

**A.** No. It is a matter of efficiency.

**Mr. Green:** It comes to this then, that production is by no means the only factor?

**A.** Not quite so. It is the inefficiency of handling the thing also.

**Q.** Distribution?

**A.** Efficiency of production also.

**Chairman:** You told us that English pictures cost 25 per cent. less. Does that mean that they are more efficient?

**A.** Their production also is much lower in grade.

**Q.** That ought to make it cheaper? If the cost of production is less and the quality is inferior, the cost of distribution must be less. It is more costly to buy a British picture here than an American picture. What is the reason for that?

**A.** The reason is that America gets back the cost of its production from its own country. Whatever they get from outside is profit.

**Q.** England is not able to do it and so she has to put on a high price to make the industry pay?

**A.** I think there is something in that.

**Sir Haroon Jaffer:** After a successful run in the home market they come here?

**A.** They simultaneously make different copies.

**Colonel Crawford:** The same will apply even more to our Indian industry where the film has a smaller market?

**A.** No. The Indian market is very big.

**Chairman:** The Indian cinemas are very few in number. We have 350 cinemas of which 200 can be put down as inferior sort.....

**Mr. Green:** Not all of them working.

**Chairman:** And speaking generally, only 150 may be said to be really good cinemas in the country. So that if we produce good pictures here and the market is very poor—if you really produce pictures which could be sold abroad, you will have to charge much more although the cost of production may be less. You won't be able to cover your expenses in your own country?

**A.** It is not so.

**Q.** Because the cost of production here is much less?

**A.** Yes. And though the number of houses here is limited, still the picture in each house gets such a crowd that within a few weeks you will get your expenses out.

**Q.** You mean to say that the cinema houses here in Calcutta or Bombay are more crowded than the cinema houses in London?

**A.** If it is a good picture it is far more crowded.

**Mr. Green:** It is begging the question, if it is a good picture.

**A.** I say if there is a good picture, the crowd will be far more than in any English or American theatre because there the police or the Government people will not allow over-crowding as they do here.

**Colonel Crawford:** Some of the houses can hold as many as 4,000 people.

**A.** But for the unit of footage of flooring you will find the Indian theatres to be much more crowded.

**Q.** Will any Indian theatre accommodate 4,000 people?

**Chairman:** Here, of course, people are cramped in just as deck passengers?

**A.** Yes. And there is another thing. Here there are travelling theatres which do not exist in any other country.

**Q.** Are they much in use?

**A.** In Calcutta you will find a dozen of these, and each company will have 5 or 6 companies running round all over the country.

**Q.** Can you give me the names of those companies?

**A.** The London Bioscope Co., the Royal Bioscope Co., etc.

**Q.** There are about a dozen companies here?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** We will be obliged if you can give us particulars about them.

**A.** I cannot give them offhand because I have to see the records to find out their address.

**Q.** Whatever you can find out kindly let us have it. You think there is a great demand for Indian pictures?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Both educational and amusement?

**A.** Unless the Government takes on the educational films there is no use. No producer will care to make them.

*Mr. Green:* I understood you did not want Government aid?

**A.** Education is the Government's affair.

**Q.** You do not mind Government assistance for public utility films?

**A.** No.

*Chairman:* It is the primary duty of Government to produce those public utility films?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** And being their duty, they ought to produce or aid in producing them. That will not be viewed with suspicion, and even if there is suspicion it should be the duty of Government to go ahead with it. Is that your point of view?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** You think there is a great demand for Indian amusement films?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Based on mythology, religion and history?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** They draw large crowds?

**A.** Very.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* More than the producers can produce?

**A.** Oh, yes.

*Chairman:* You mean the supply is not sufficient?

**A.** Not at all.

**Q.** Rather, all the cinemas do not exhibit Indian films. Supposing all the cinemas now running in the country were to exhibit a certain proportion of Indian films, don't you think it would induce a larger supply?

**A.** It is not enough for first class pictures. Second class pictures are now made.

**Q.** Even the 3rd class and 4th class pictures draw huge Indian crowds?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Supposing every cinema is compelled to show a certain proportion of Indian films, don't you think the supply will be encouraged?

**A.** Supply is sufficiently encouraged, because 3rd and 4th class pictures are being used by these travelling companies for the villagers. But the city population will want at least first and second class pictures.

**Q.** Do you consider the population of Bhowanipore city population or not?

**A.** It is city population.

**Q.** Do you consider they are sufficiently advanced as Indians generally are, not probably as advanced as Europeans in their own country?

**A. Yes.**

**Q. Do you consider the locality where the Crown Cinema is quite an advanced place?**

**A. Yes.**

**Q. We saw third class pictures there and they were crowded like anything. Therefore, I say, there is a great demand for Indian pictures although they may be 3rd class and 4th class pictures. What do you think of the film, "Sankaracharya"?**

**A. It is a very poor production.**

**Q. It has attracted a large audience.**

**A. It has a religious bias.**

**Q. Therefore Indian productions of whatever sort attract huge Indian crowds?**

**A. Yes. It is never a failure if it is Indian.**

**Q. Do you think the crowds will be so large if all the cinemas show such pictures?**

**A. If they will show, perhaps the efficiency also will increase.**

**Q. So that you think that something like the quota system which they are now introducing in England may be introduced in this country?**

**A. Any kind of obligatory affair is detrimental to business efficiency.**

**Q. You do not believe that what England has done for her own industry in England is good for India?**

**A. No. Any kind of obligatory thing—Indians will not stand any kind of obligatory affair.**

**Q. If Indians value Indian pictures they won't object to it?**

**A. No. If it is commercially a benefit to the producer he will do it himself. Why do you want to compel him to do it?**

**Q. Theatres would not show. They fear that they will be driving away the westerner or the westernised Indians?**

**A. If they can make enough money from Indian audiences what do they care for those people?**

**Q. Do the fashionable theatres show Indian pictures here?**

**A. As yet they cannot. The fashionable theatres in India are being controlled by Anglicised people who do not understand Indian psychology.**

**Q. Do you know about Madras, Bombay.—all the big towns.....**

**A. I cannot say about those towns so much as I can say about Calcutta, because it is a monopoly.**

**Q. What do you call a monopoly?**

**A. Most of the best theatres are controlled by one concern and they have more Anglicised sympathy than Indian sympathy.**

**Q. You mean to say as a matter of business or personal predilection?**

**A. It is business and personal both.**

**Q. How is it personal?**

**A. Because they began business very low and they grew only by their favour.**

**Q. If, as you say, they can depend upon the Indian audiences—you yourself told us just a minute ago that if they can depend on Indian audiences—why should they care for the small westernised audience?**

**A. They are gradually opening up more and more theatres. Before that Indian pictures would not have any booking there.**

**Q. Even the monopolist about whom you mention is opening his eyes to the utility of Indian films?**

**A. Yes.**

**Q. Is that the reason why you say you need have no compulsion?**



A. That is it exactly. Let the audiences and the business men decide for themselves.

Q. You do not think the Indian industry requires such an encouragement as to compel people to exhibit a certain length of Indian films?

A. No compulsion is necessary. It will not be helpful further.

Q. Do you think England has done wrong?

A. That is their country. They can do anything they like.

Q. This is also our country. Supposing we can do something, why should we not do that?

A. I do not agree on that point.

Q. Is it on principle.....

A. It is not a fact that we can do anything we like in our country.

Q. Supposing we can?

A. At present.....

Q. I am putting it to you—the question now before you is, will you advise us to recommend to Government that the compulsory quota system which has been adopted in England may be adopted in this country for the purpose of encouraging the Indian film industry?

A. No.

Q. Why not?

A. No business can stand really.....

Q. Is it on principle then?

A. Yes.

Q. Then why did you introduce, this is not our Government and all that? Your argument seems to be confused. I thought you based your argument on the question it is not our Government. Supposing it was our Government, would you advise it?

A. That is a different matter. I cannot say that now.

Q. I want you to divorce politics as far as possible from the business aspect of the question.

A. But both are allied.

Q. In a way they are, but we have to make our recommendations and we want your help. Please divorce politics from this business. It is a small business and if it thrives, all right. I think I have done with production so far. Are you familiar with the distribution side and exhibition side?

A. To a certain extent.

Q. You talked of monopoly. I suppose you mean by that that a man with finance and business capacity is controlling more theatres in the natural course of things, just as you can as well say that a big commercial place has got a monopoly in certain things. It is only in that class?

A. Yes.

Q. There is nothing to prevent other people showing the same enterprise and energy as the people now in charge, except that they will have to face competition from a big rival, just as new steamship companies have to face Lord Inchcape?

A. Exactly the same way in every detail and particular.

Q. What do you, as a business man, suggest should be the remedy for that except enterprise and energy?

A. Yes, enterprise and energy.

Q. Do you think Government should interfere in a matter like that? It is the natural evolution of trade, is it not so in every trade?

A. I should think so.

Q. Therefore what is the good of giving it a bad name unless you want some action taken?

A. We will pass it as such.

**Q.** Do you think exhibitors suffer from want of supply of pictures?

**A.** The travelling cinema companies deal with third and fourth class pictures. They do not. But the bigger companies do.

**Q.** They are able to get their pictures?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Do you think it will be a paying proposition for travelling companies to exhibit better pictures than they do?

**A.** It will not be.

**Q.** They are not faced with any real difficulty as regards the supply of what they want?

**A.** Not quite so.

**Q.** So you think the arrangement at present existing as regards the supply of pictures must be deemed to be satisfactory?

**A.** The poor exhibitors have their objections to that. They want easier tariff.

**Q.** Do you advocate it?

**A.** Not at all. I want to raise it by 100 per cent.

**Q.** What is your object?

**A.** To encourage the growth of Indian manufactures.

**Q.** You believe in that sort of indirect compulsion, but not in direct compulsion?

**A.** Every nation has its right to develop its own industries by protection.

**Q.** You believe in increasing the tariff on foreign films?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** And also reducing the tariff on raw films and materials needed for the production of films?

**A.** They should be absolutely free.

**Q.** Do you think it is essential for the development of the industry in this country?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Can you tell me how long after a film is released in America it is brought to this country, on an average?

**A.** Sometimes one month and sometimes one year. If it is a very good picture they take care to bring it out earlier. If a picture is made and finished in October, that picture will come to Calcutta nearly in the first part of December. But if it is made in January it might take till November following.

**Q.** You mean the cold weather here attracts large crowds?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** It is in that way they manipulate their orders?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** You know what is meant by block booking and blind booking?

**A.** I have some idea.

**Q.** Does such a system prevail with reference to Indian exhibitors of Indian pictures?

**A.** No, not to my knowledge.

**Q.** That is to say, is the exhibitor free to buy what he wants?

**A.** Some of them who have taken contracts for, say, three years, will show such and such company's productions. That company may be making a thousand pictures but the Indian exhibitor requires only 200. So he has a right to choose the 200 out of that 1,000.

**Q.** What is the average quantity of films imported into this country from abroad?

**A.** You have got statistics.

*Q.* I don't mean copies, but is there any way of getting exactly the number of films imported into this country?

*A.* I do not know if anything has been done systematically to ascertain this.

*Q.* You said that America produces a much larger quantity of films and the supply to India is very limited? But we have heard complaints that there is block booking in this country also?

*A.* I have no knowledge of it, and I doubt whether there is really any such thing here.

*Q.* Do you think that the trade does not suffer from any defect due to block booking?

*A.* I don't think so. Nor is there any blind booking in the real sense.

*Q.* There is blind booking in Britain?

*A.* In other countries where there are numerous theatres it may be possible, but not in a country like ours.

*Q.* As regards Indian films, does any party enter into a contract with the producers?

*A.* As yet Indian production is very limited, and so it is not necessary for them to enter into any such arrangement.

*Mr. Green:* Do you know anything about the Bombay producers?

*A.* I know what they are doing.

*Q.* Do you know about their system of distribution?

*A.* Yes, to some extent.

*Chairman:* I believe the producers are financed by the exhibitors, i.e., the exhibitors undertake to take all the productions, but not in the sense of blindly taking what they do not want.

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Does the person who imports the films charge very exorbitant prices to the exhibitor?

*A.* In fact the biggest exhibitor here is also the biggest importer. There are a few agencies which import foreign films, but they deal with only second class and third class pictures and their prices are not very high.

*Q.* Is there anything from which the trade suffers and for which the public should step in and help them out of it?

*A.* Lack of capital.

*Q.* Are you thinking of production or of exhibition?

*A.* One will facilitate the other, better production and more production will also help the exhibitor.

*Q.* So that you think that if the exhibitor suffers at all from any disadvantage, it is from the want of Indian films, and that he does not labour under any difficulty so far as foreign films are concerned?

*A.* I think so.

*Q.* As you are a frequenter of cinemas, I should like to ask you one or two questions about the social aspects. I suppose you know the nature of the people who attend the various cinemas. I suppose you are quite familiar with Calcutta?

*A.* Yes, I am.

*Q.* Do you think there is any evil effect produced by the cinema in the province?

*A.* I don't think so.

*Q.* Talking as a parent or as an elder brother, putting aside all bias, but speaking as an Indian citizen looking to the welfare of the Indian people, do you think that any injury is being done or there is a danger resulting from the cinema?

A. I don't think either.

Q. There is a conflict of opinion on that point, and it may be because you have seen European life so much that your judgment in that matter may be over confident in the strength of the people.

A. That is not so. I may say that Calcutta theatre-goers perhaps see much worse things of European countries here in the city itself without visiting foreign countries. What I mean is the bad part of European life is exhibited on the stage already everywhere, and so the pictures on the screen cannot make matters worse.

Q. That leads me to the next question, and that shows that you have some bias. Do you mean that theatres also should be stopped?

A. I am against the theatres, I don't think they do any good.

Q. Then your argument comes to this, that because the public bluntly tolerate certain nude scenes on the stage and don't complain about them, what right have they to complain of what is shown on the screen? Is that so?

A. I don't think either is harmful.

Q. Then why did you introduce the analogy in your answer to my question, how had it any bearing?

A. My question was not about theatres at all.

Q. You said that people who go to the Calcutta theatres see much worse things exhibited of European life on the scene?

A. I am sorry. You put me a question and said that, perhaps, I may be biased because I have lived for such a long time in foreign countries, and I said that the present cinema-goers of Calcutta see very much worse things here than what they can see in London itself. So that they stand in exactly the same position as a man who has been to England. They see the actual life in the streets and in the theatres, so that they are not likely to misunderstand or misappreciate western life by seeing the western films.

Q. Your point of view then is that people here are not likely to misunderstand the western life, and they will understand that it is the normal life of the people in the west?

A. I don't think so, for even in Bengali stages we have seen many times that either the son-in-law or the mother-in-law is beating the other, but that does not mean that we should imitate them.

Q. And the audience who go to the Bengali theatres may be safely compared to the so-called illiterate audiences who go to the western shows, and just as they would not misunderstand what they see on the stage, similarly they will not misunderstand what they will see on the screen.

A. Exactly.

Q. So that any complaint that western life is being misrepresented in this country is entirely without foundation?

A. I never heard such a complaint from the people of this country.

Q. But it is the people who are misrepresented who complain about it? It is they who complain?

A. That is a matter of controversy, and I would prefer to leave it alone.

Q. At any rate, you will bow to their opinion, won't you? when they say that they are being misrepresented?

A. Do you mean to say that because we are showing our films against Miss Mayo's book they have a right to complain that they are being misrepresented. If the conditions were the same and the statements had been similar in nature, they would, of course, have had every right to complain.

Q. Then you don't misrepresent them?

A. No.

Q. They misrepresent themselves, if at all?

A. I don't understand the meaning of your question.

**Q.** It is not the Indians who misrepresent the westerner in this country?

**A.** To that extent they are indifferent. It is the look out of the people who say that they are being misrepresented to put matters right.

**Q.** But if it has at the same time a baneful influence upon our Indian people, then is it not our duty to set matters right?

**A.** It matters little to the people, speaking as a member of the public; it has no bad effect.

**Q.** Do you see any objectionable posters?

**A.** I have not seen any myself, but I have heard so far only of one case.

**Q.** I suppose you see posters and handbills outside the theatres, don't you?

**A.** They are absolutely harmless things.

**Q.** Supposing you show a picture with a man kissing a woman and the poster says "do likewise", is it objectionable or not?

**A.** I have not seen any picture like that in Calcutta. Such a poster may have been exhibited in some other part of the country, but none has been exhibited here in Calcutta so far.

**Q.** I suppose these posters are made attractive to attract customers, is it not?

**A.** Not in Bengal. That may be the case elsewhere.

**Q.** You don't think that the posters also should be censored? What is the harm in censoring them?

**A.** There is no better censor than the public themselves.

**Q.** You mean posters showing deep kissing, hugging and so on need not be censored, because crowds will be gazing at them on the streets?

**A.** Does anybody think that the public have no moral sense of their own?

**Q.** Why do they look at them? Do you think it is conducive to good taste that people should be gazing at such pictures?

**A.** But is it a fact that people will be gazing at such pictures? I don't think that the people of this country will ever care to look at such posters.

**Q.** Don't crowds gather round theatres?

**A.** Not to look at the posters. They look at them to appreciate the adventurous character of the films.

**Q.** What percentage of the films imported into this country form really sex films?

**A.** It depends upon what you call sex films.

**Q.** Films showing passionate love making, deep and prolonged kissing, embracing and drinking scenes?

**A.** So long as there are saloons for people to drink, why should they not?

**Q.** What percentage of such films come into this country?

**A.** It is a small percentage. I cannot give an exact idea.

**Q.** What was your difficulty with regard to the company which you wanted to float?

**A.** It is half floated. The difficulty is because some Indian concerns have failed, capital is shy, and people are not willing to put money in any kind of concerns.

**Q.** And you think that, if you are properly financed, you will be able to make headway with your concern?

**A.** I am sure of that.

**Q.** Or rather, if you are assured of orders from Government you will be able to get on with your company?

**A.** Yes, to some extent.

**Q.** Will you be able to find a financier if you are assured of Government orders from various departments?

**A.** That also will help me.

**Q.** Have you any idea as to what sort of companies should be encouraged?

A. Absolutely Indian companies should be encouraged and foreign companies should not receive any sort of aid from Government. If any aid is going to be given by Government it should be given only to purely Indian concerns.

Q. You don't object to association with foreigners, i.e., if foreigners come here and start a concern with a majority of Indian directorate and Indian capital, you will perhaps have no objection?

A. I should prefer Indian capital.

Q. But you yourself just now said that Indian capital is shy?

A. But still the company must be floated in India.

Q. If there is a majority of Indian directors and a majority of Indian shareholders, then perhaps you would agree to Government giving aid to such a concern, if it is to be given at all?

A. Yes, for the present only.

Q. Do you think it is essential that the film industry should be established in this country, because we are able to get an number of films from foreign countries? Why should the Government take the trouble of supporting Indian films?

A. The present Government does not know its own mind, but if we had popular Government things would have been quite otherwise.

Q. On what grounds do you think that it is necessarily a part of the duty of the Government to help the Indian industry?

A. It must be the duty of any Government to support the indigenous industries.

Q. Does any other country do it? Does any other Government even a National Government do it?

A. Yes. Russia does it. China was doing it.

Q. Can you give us any literature on that subject as to what Russia and China were doing?

A. I can. I shall send it on to you.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* You have stated in your statement that Government should lend 5 lakhs of rupees to help some concerns. On what securities do you think that Government should advance the money?

A. Government should see that all the money that is given is used by the concern and that the whole concern should be taken as collateral security for the money advanced.

Q. Do you think the local bankers will accept on mortgage the studios in this country and give them money?

A. They will certainly advance one-third of the amount.

Q. They don't do so. Then why should Government advance the money without proper security?

A. It is Government's business to see that this industry flourishes for their purpose, because it will also save the unemployment problem to some extent.

Q. Now, Madans are doing very good business and they are well known here. Do you object to Government giving them, say, five or ten lakhs of rupees for further developing their business?

A. Yes.

Q. Why not? They would certainly do better work and help the Indian industry?

A. That concern is standing on its own legs already.

Q. What is their share value?

A. The share value cannot be taken as an index to the success of the concern.

Q. Its face value is Rs. 5 and the market value is also Rs. 5, then how do you say they are doing well?

A. You are right in your figures.

Q. Such a concern cannot be called a flourishing concern?

A. It has gone through different fortunes.

Q. Do you know how much dividend they paid last time?

A. They paid annas four on Rs. 10, but for 4 years they did not pay anything at all. In fact, their share value went down to Rs. 2.

Q. In that case do you think that they are standing on their own legs?

A. Yes, now they are standing on their own legs.

Q. That is to say, after 4 years they are standing on their own legs?

A. Yes.

Q. So you think it is no use Government giving aid to such concerns if they come forward and ask for help and if they accept certain conditions imposed by Government?

A. That is a personal matter. I cannot see their working, and Government should be the better judges.

Q. Are you debarred from buying their shares?

A. Not at all. The public can buy their shares only to a small extent, because a few directors control all the shares, and so we cannot get more shares in the market.

Q. Then, if you raise the tariff, don't you think other countries will retaliate on raw films by increasing their value?

A. That will necessitate the production of raw films as well here. So much the better, because another industry could be started.

Q. You have referred to the jute cess and tea cess, etc. Don't you think that the entertainment tax which is already in existence should be utilised for the encouragement of this industry?

A. I have no objection to it.

Q. Then why do you mention jute cess and tea cess when you know that there is an entertainment tax on the cinemas?

A. If we tax the very industry which we are trying to encourage, then we will be cutting our own throats.

Q. Then you don't want the entertainment tax?

A. Let it remain, but it need not be increased.

Q. If it remains, do you think that the money derived should be utilised for encouraging the industry?

A. Exactly so.

Q. If that is done, then there won't be any need to take money from the jute cess, tea cess and so on?

A. If the money collected from the entertainment tax is adequate.

Q. In reply to question No. 27-B you refer to a missionary effort. Have you seen that picture?

A. I saw a part of it when it was being made. It was never exhibited here.

Q. Does it show the Indian in any shady colour?

A. Almost on the same lines as Miss Mayo's book.

Q. It may be due to their wanting to collect some money in England?

A. Whatever may have been their object, the picture was made in Calcutta, right in the Grand Hotel, for exhibition abroad. It was produced here by some missionary for exhibition abroad.

Q. Then you think that these anti-Indian pictures are made in India and supported by interested parties for propaganda purposes?

A. That is my idea.

Q. And you think they should be censored before they are sent out?

A. Quite so.

Q. You just said you had a free ticket and that you could visit any theatre. Could you tell me if such passes are given to the police and to

other people as well, because we were told in another place that at least 25 per cent. of the audience is composed of free pass holders?

A. That may be so, and since I am not an exhibitor, I cannot give an answer to it.

Q. Those who have got a free pass probably may know that there are others as well who have got similar passes?

A. That is talking offhand, I cannot say anything.

Q. Do you think actors and actresses will readily come forward from respectable families and participate in the production of films?

A. Yes, if the concerns are properly financed and managed by men of culture.

Q. And you think they will mix themselves up with prostitutes?

A. Why should they mix up with prostitutes?

Q. Should prostitutes be prohibited from taking part in the industry if they come forward?

A. Not at all; they should also remain.

Q. They will become respectable, I suppose, by associating with better class people.

A. In India the word "prostitutes" is misapplied. Even good musicians and dancers are classed as prostitutes here, whereas in Europe they are all classed as respectable people though they follow the same profession.

Q. What percentage of American pictures from England come to India?

A. I cannot say that offhand.

Q. They are mostly inferior films showing the under world side?

A. The word 'inferior' is something controversial.

Q. Then they are very good?

A. That does not mean they are good.

Q. What do you say about the British films?

A. They are inferior in efficiency. I am not comparing it with the sex side, but as to production the British films are far inferior to American films.

Q. Would you compare it with the sex question?

A. There is not much to choose between the two so far as social dramas are concerned.

Mr. Neogy: Could you give us the subjects of a few films which you may have produced for the Publicity Department here?

A. I have mentioned them in my pamphlet.

Q. What were the themes?

A. I made a drama in which I include something of agriculture, of co-operative societies, of public health, in fact it shows something of everything.

Q. Your experience is that instruction on these subjects lends itself to picture stories very well?

A. Yes, and these films are very popular in rural areas.

Q. Are they being shown anywhere in Bengal now?

A. Two months ago it was being shown in Patna.

Q. Had the Government of Bihar and Orissa anything to do with it?

A. They took the picture on loan from the Bengal Government.

Q. You said that you did the scenario writing for them?

A. I did everything.

Q. You did not get any technical instructions from the department concerned?

A. None at all. Only they gave me suggestions.

Q. Were the suggestions of a general character or were they in detail?

A. They only gave me general directions, saying that I should produce something on Cholera, on Small pox, money lending at 15 per cent., agri-



culture and how to make it pay better and so on, and I had to build my stories on those general directions.

*Q.* They gave you written instructions on those points and they did not depute any of their officers to assist you?

*A.* No.

*Chairman:* I suppose you sent your stories to the departments concerned for approval?

*A.* Yes.

*Mr. Neogy:* You had also to collect together actors?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Was the acting in this particular film required to be of a very high order?

*A.* Yes, otherwise the film would not have appealed to the people.

*Q.* Where was this picture taken mostly?

*A.* It was taken mostly in a village about 15 miles from Calcutta.

*Q.* And the people of that locality sufficed for acting, and you had not to take anybody from Calcutta or from other parts?

*A.* Some of the parts were taken in Calcutta and the colouring was done locally.

*Q.* Supposing you had run a concern on a commercial basis, would you always depend upon getting the services of actors and actresses like that without maintaining a permanent establishment of your own?

*A.* It may be as a side line; I may have to keep a coaching class and teach them acting and so on.

*Q.* And not necessarily employ them whole time?

*A.* No.

*Q.* With regard to the idea of a Government studio, supposing the Government of India were to have a studio established somewhere in India,—not necessarily in Bengal,—for the production of all these publicity films on behalf of the Provincial Governments, which is bound to be a very high class studio, and supposing they were to lend their experts to private producers. You have already said that the private producer would not make any very great use of such facilities, and your apprehension is that production of that kind would be looked upon with suspicion. That was your main point?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Apart from that, supposing there was no such political prejudice attached to the pictures produced in such a studio, do you think that the conditions would be quite favourable to a private producer in Bengal to take his actors and actresses, his property and his scenery relating to a particular picture down to Bombay, for instance, or to Delhi, or some other place where the studio may be located, for the purpose of producing a picture?

*A.* The first condition is if there be no political prejudice at all; then it is a very good idea. People ought to take advantage and I think they will. But under present conditions I doubt if they will.

*Q.* Well, I am not thinking of the political bias at all. Do you think that you will be able to collect your actors and actresses, whom you are now employing on a permanent basis and take them all down to a distant part of the country, house them there, carry the property and sceneries that you require for the production of a particular play, stay there till you finish the whole thing, and come back?

*Chairman:* You are piling on the agony.

*A.* It is a question that depends very much on the nature of the particular story you wish to screen. It is hard to say. In some pictures you may use only 3 people and the rest you would get from the locality. In other cases you would need a host of people. It is very hard to answer that question.

*Mr. Neogy:* But take the average. You cannot always produce a picture with three men, and thousands may not be necessary either in every case.

*A.* No. Well, if the studio is located somewhere near Calcutta or Bombay, I think it is possible.

*Q.* Bombay people would find it easy to come to Calcutta; nor would Calcutta people find it difficult to go to Bombay?

*A.* Not so much.

*Q.* And supposing there is accommodation enough for 2 or 3 or 4 producing companies to work at the same time in the studio, do you think one producing company would have any jealousy of any other or any suspicion about its secrets being divulged or anything of that kind which would militate against the success of such a scheme?

*A.* I think so.

*Q.* And then again, supposing you take up the production of a particular film, so long as you have got to take the pictures from the outdoor, that is to say, the natural scenery, you have got to depend on the particular surroundings which you want to reproduce, and to that extent the studio may not be of any very great use. You will have to shoot your pictures in the open air, for instance.

*A.* Nowadays the open air portion is being curtailed as much as possible, because the harmonising of the light is not so easy if it is done in the open air.

*Q.* So even open air scenes will have to be reproduced in the studio, if you want uniformity of lighting?

*A.* To some extent.

*Q.* Very well then. Supposing you have to reproduce the rural scenes of Bengal in another province where the natural scenery differs very much from the natural scenery in Bengal, you will have to reproduce the outdoor scenery of Bengal in the studio by artificial means for the purpose of getting the proper background for your pictures. Isn't that so?

*A.* It is a very big question. We have to take some actual scenery outside and then match it up inside.

*Q.* And so far as you have to shoot pictures outside, you will have to do it in the particular locality which you want to reproduce on the screen. Therefore, if it is a Bengal picture, that part of the work will have to be done in Bengal?

*A.* Quite so.

*Q.* And then supposing you have to take inside pictures for which you have to utilise a central Government studio, and supposing you make application to the central studio people and supposing they say there is no vacancy just now, as some other producing concern is engaged in producing a picture, you will have to wait.

*Chairman:* That is obvious, Mr. Neogy.

*A.* That cannot be done.

*Mr. Neogy:* Your studio facilities must be always at your command? That condition is essential?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Very well. Now then, in these circumstances, do you think that any efficient producing concern can ever do without a studio of its own, and depend entirely on a Government studio?

*A.* Not at all. That is absurd.

*Q.* To that extent the Government studio may not be of any use to him?

*A.* Not at all.

*Q.* Very well. Now come back to government propaganda films. You have experience of producing films on behalf of Government?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Would you prefer Government producing their own films in their own studio or would you prefer Government giving orders to a private studio for the production of their films? Which would be more preferable?

*A.* Well, as I am a business man outside, I would certainly say we ought to get the orders. But if Government can have its own studio, I wouldn't mind it.

*Chairman:* May I put one question? Which do you think would be more effective from the public point of view—as a citizen I ask you. For producing these public utility films which would be the more effective agency for the sort of films you want? Supposing you as a legislator had to vote on a matter like that. For what will you vote?

*Mr. Green:* Perhaps it is a little difficult for the witness to dissociate himself from the business point of view.

*Chairman:* I want you to dissociate yourself as much as possible. Forget that you are a likely producer and look at it from the public point of view.

*A.* Well, as I say the Government ought to do it themselves.

*Mr. Neogy:* And when you say "Government" do you mean the Provincial Governments should do it separately for themselves or do you suggest that there should be a central studio doing the work for all the provinces?

*A.* It is not possible for a central studio to do it. There are affairs which are absolutely provincial and there are subjects which are all-India. If all-India subjects are tackled by the central studio and provincial subjects by the provinces, that would be the best way of adjusting the matter.

*Q.* And for the provincial subjects you would advocate a Provincial Government studio?

*A.* Quite so.

*Q.* Now do you consider the film that you have mentioned to be a provincial film or a film with an all-India interest?

*A.* The interest may be all-India but as the background is of Bengal, the characters depicted also of Bengal, it may not have the same appeal to men in the Punjab as it has in Bengal. So I would consider it provincial, though the subjects are all-India.

*Q.* Very well. So far as public health, co-operation, agriculture, industries, and education are concerned, these are the subjects on which generally the public utility films will have to be produced. Now, which out of these subjects do you think would lend itself to all-India treatment in a central studio and need not have a provincial setting?

*A.* Well, all these subjects could be made all-India and all these subjects could be made provincial. Because we producers know the trick of putting the whole thing together so that it will have an all-India aspect. And we can also make it altogether provincial.

*Q.* Now supposing that particular film that you have produced . . .

*A.* I could make it all-India. But as it is produced it is all in Bengal.

*Q.* Supposing you were to make it an all-India picture, do you think it would lose an interest from the Bengal point of view, remembering always the audience to whom you have got to appeal—the rural people?

*A.* We could include both.

*Q.* In what way?

*A.* My cholera might start from Bengal and spread over to Lahore.

*Q.* I see. That is a very ingenious suggestion.

*Chairman:* That is the trick of the producer.

*A.* As I said before.

*Mr. Green:* Show it being carried by train.

*Mr. Neogy:* Now, people of every province could be made to take a certain part in the production of such a film and from that point of view it would appeal to the people of the different provinces.

*A.* Yes.

*Chairman:* And be equally efficient?

*A. Yes.*

*Mr. Neogy:* Now about government aid to private concerns. You are in favour of confining government aid only to those concerns which have not been able to stand on their own legs.

*A. Yes.*

*Q.* Does it not come to this, that Government should lend their money to those concerns which have very little to offer by way of security and withhold their assistance from those others which can find the necessary security? Does it not come to that?

*A. Yes.* Thereby Government will help monopoly and keep people with less capital and perhaps more efficiency out of the market. Competition will be killed.

*Mr. Green:* Mr. Neogy put it the other way.

*A. Yes.*

*Mr. Neogy:* I didn't quite understand what you actually mean by saying "collateral" when you were asked what security Government should accept. Take the case of a concern which has not succeeded in establishing itself. That is the concern to which government aid should be given according to you?

*A. Yes.*

*Q.* Now what security can Government look forward to in the case of such a concern?

*A.* The first thing is there are some block materials, camera projectors, machinery, land and the stage. Now supposing the need for that is Rs. 50,000. If Government say that they are ready to advance Rs. 25,000 if another Rs. 25,000 could be found on the mortgage of the thing. You see my point? I do not mean absolute charity. Government can be a partner in the business.

*Chairman:* Government can take shares.

*Mr. Green:* Couldn't you get the same advance from the banks?—If it is only on half value?

*A.* It is not possible at present in industrial affairs. There is hardly any bank in Calcutta, so far I can say, that will advance money on industrial affairs.

*Mr. Neogy:* With regard to the existing field for the Indian pictures. That is comparatively limited. But don't you think that provided the quality is improved, the number of theatres might also increase? For instance, Indian women folk, so far as I know, have not taken so much to cinema going. They go only to the Indian pictures. Supposing there were more of Indian pictures and of better quality, don't you think that they could find their own audience at once?

*A.* The field is limitless. It is not restrained or confined into several cinema theatres only. As in our country there is the Mahabharata and education and knowledge of them is spread to the remotest part of the village, even without having pathshalas. In the same way, the influence of the cinema is unlimited, and it will go from village to village.

*Q.* And therefore your opinion is that there is no ground for any apprehension?

*A.* No apprehension should be there at all.

*Chairman:* What about the poverty of the people? Do you think they can afford it?

*A.* This is a country where one can feed thousands of people, where rich European countries can't. We will make them sit on the grass and see it in the open air. We will make it cheaper.

*Mr. Neogy:* In that way you can always count upon a gradually expanding market, just as the supply of good pictures goes on increasing.

*A. Yes.*

*Colonel Crawford:* When you were answering the Chairman, you said you thought imported pictures were produced at about a third less price than it took to produce Indian pictures.

A. To the exhibitor it will cost more.

Q. But I understand that very often, so far as the exhibitor is concerned, he works on the hire system—60 per cent. to him and 40 per cent. to the importer or distributor.

A. Not always.

Q. Well, they vary slightly, but I understand the average is 60/40.

A. He has to pay the outside weekly rent. It is mostly weekly rent, not the hire system.

Q. That is what I wanted to find out.

A. In Calcutta it is to some extent the hire system, only for Madans two or three theatres.

Q. For the big theatres it is hire and for the small ones it is rent?

A. Even the big theatres some of them are rent, not hire.

Q. Well now, you have been a long time abroad in the industry?

A. Yes.

Q. We have under consideration the possibility of scholarships abroad for the purpose of training people in the film industry. Are we faced with any difficulties in that way for sending men abroad to get the adequate training?

A. Yes.

Q. What are they?

A. There are two difficulties. The first thing is there are a few here already. What provision has been made for them? So naturally others will hesitate to go, since they won't know what will happen to them when they come back. The second thing is the best country to learn that in is using that business almost with a monopolistic idea. They don't want to take foreigners into it.

Q. Trade jealousies and trade secrets? You think we are definitely faced with these difficulties?

A. Yes.

Q. Well then, as regards training, on the whole you would be in favour of our training the men here in preference to sending them abroad?

A. I would prefer the Japanese method. Hire the services of well trained experts on short time contracts,—and they are here.

Q. Well, now, you mentioned the cost of production of western films and the amounts paid to actors. I understand that the actor is an important feature of the film. The public demand that Douglas Fairbanks or Harold Lloyd or Mary Pickford should be in the picture. Is that position arising in India?

A. Not at all at present. Because our actors are not on Rs. 5,000 a month. Take Ramchandra. Anybody can take the part and so that is enough.

*Chairman:* But you cannot have all films of Ramchandra.

*Colonel Crawford:* In some places we were told that Miss Sita Devi is popular with the audiences and if she is shown as acting in a scene, as far away as Peshawar, they get a big audience.

A. Not because of Sita Devi.

Q. You don't believe that. Is that position likely to arise?

A. It may eventually.

Q. And the moment it arises, these people will be able to ask for increased salary?

A. No. India is a country of 300 million people. If one Sita Devi charges too much, she will be thrown overboard, and another Sita Devi will come forward.

**Q.** You think you will be able to get them anyhow?

**A.** Quite so.

**Q.** Now then, do you consider that the Indian market—I rather gather you do—is entirely adequate for the Indian film industry, and that they need not look abroad?

**A.** Not at all.

**Q.** Of course if they do get the foreign market, so much the better for the business.

**Q.** I see in the figures you gave in your prospectus, that you count on being able to show a film in a hundred cinemas and to get a profit of Rs. 20,000. I consider that a fair estimate. Now, that perhaps limits your production to 15,000.

**A.** Yes. In the same way I have limited my rental also to the absolute minimum of 500 also. Whereas the average rate is 500 to 2,000 per week.

**Q.** In your big cities?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** I have taken your prices on an average.

**A.** Well, even at that, the first rent. I have given only the theatres that are there. But these travelling companies that I talk about, which are many, I have not mentioned about.

**Q.** You are quite satisfied that the Indian market is big enough?

**A.** To give profits for Indian productions.

**Q.** We have not to look to foreign markets?

**A.** Not at present.

**Q.** Well, I will just take you up on the question of Empire films. I have read your statement and I quite agree with you that with your present quality you could not hope to fill any of the quota of British Empire films in other parts of the Empire.

**A.** Quite so.

**Q.** But at the same time, if you definitely say: "Well no, we don't want to take part in that", they are at liberty to say: "Very well, if you don't take ours, we won't take yours".

**A.** We don't lose anything by that.

**Q.** At the moment you don't lose anything. Might I suggest to you that if you had such a policy in India, the quota of Empire films in India would be entirely filled by Indian produced films?

**A.** I could not quite follow you.

**Q.** Supposing instead of putting on your quota for Indian films in this country, we were of the opinion that to help the Indian industry we should put on a definite quota for films produced in India in theatres in India—

**A.** It is not necessary.

**Q.** I know you say it is not necessary. But we might consider it advisable. Supposing we made such a recommendation, we could word our recommendation—instead of saying Indian films we could say British Empire films, but go on to say that so far as British Empire films were concerned in India, they should be filled by Indian produced films which are British Empire films.

**A.** No, it will be detrimental to our industry.

**Q.** To have a quota for Indian films?

**A.** Yes.

**Chairman:** But I want you to assume that we have come to the other decision against you and suggest to you, rather than get hostility for our film industry—I am off politics for the moment—in other parts of the Empire, we should accept a place in the policy, make a reservation that so far as India was concerned, the quota will be filled by Indian produced films which are also British Empire films.

A. I don't see anything in that at all. It is better to be straight and above-board than to go in for diplomacy.

*Chairman:* He does not believe in it.

*Colonel Crawford:* Well now, you came to protection in order to help the Indian industry. Well, does the Indian industry only consist of the producer, or am I right in saying that it consists also of the exhibitor?

A. Both.

Q. Well then, you are quite prepared to hit the exhibitor for the benefit of the producer?

A. The exhibitor is only handling the money. He is not really an industrialist. He is an exhibitor, shopkeeper.

Q. Yes, but you have got to hit him to benefit the other people.

A. Because we are trying to benefit the industry.

Q. Well, I take both. The producer is no good unless he has got some place to exhibit his film.

A. But he knows well that if the exhibitor does not find a place to get his things from he will have to take the things where he can get it.

Q. He is apt to take Indian films. You may make him take Indian films but you cannot make the audience go to him.

A. We know that the audience do fall for Indian films.

Q. In certain theatres?

A. Yes.

Q. But presumably he draws a certain amount of his revenues from what I would call the westernised Indians or Europeans?

A. The percentage is not so very great.

Q. And he will not be damaged by an increased duty on western films?

A. I don't think so.

Q. Is there any large import of cheap films into India?

A. Quite a lot.

Q. Now, as regards the social aspects. You say that you think no harm is being done by the display of western—I don't mean exactly western life—but certain aspects of western life, in India?

A. In certain society.

Q. I have been very struck by the modesty shown in the Indian films between the sexes. It leaves on my mind an impression that possibly western films may definitely give offence to Indian public opinion.

A. Not quite so. Indian films are as yet very much in their infancy.

Q. Yes, but I have not seen any production of a kissing scene in an Indian film.

A. Why not. Come and see . . . . That is the one that is bringing in the best money for Madans. There are quite a lot of kissing scenes in it.

Q. Most of the scenes I have seen—

A. You must have seen the religious films.

Q. We saw one being produced to-day.

A. I say you must have seen religious films, not social.

*Chairman:* Would you like Indian films to develop on that line at all?

A. It will develop its own qualities. It will not develop any borrowed qualities.

Q. That is what I say. Do you think there is a chance of Indian films trying to imitate western films in that sort of love films?

A. It cannot imitate. Because the audience would not stand for it. If it does one day, the next day it will have to change its policy.

*Colonel Crawford:* Does that mean they also won't stand for the display of such scenes in western films?

A. The audience of our country is already against such scenes.

*Chairman:* But you just told us that the audience would stand for it.

A. If they don't like it they won't stand for it and the exhibitor will find it is not beneficial. But the people do like it. They don't dislike it because they don't find anything unseemly in it.

Q. Yes, that is what I wanted to know. Would they like to see two Hindus kissing and embracing and hugging each other in the way in which western films show them? That is the question I asked you. I thought you answered—No.

A. This time you have put more emphasis and more congested your question. And even at that, you add "as is done in western pictures".

Q. Would the Indian audience tolerate such a scene in Indian dramas where Hindus participate? I want a straight answer to my straight question. Supposing you were to produce an Indian film in which Hindus take part. Do you think the Indian audience would tolerate a Hindu man and a Hindu woman hugging and kissing each other in the way in which western scenes are shown in this country? That is my point. Would you consider it desirable that a development should take place in that direction?

A. They will do it in the Indian way.

Q. Exactly. They won't do it in the western way.

A. But Indian ways comprise everything. Even western ways are in it.

Q. As a Hindu would you like such a development to take place in our country?

A. I don't say anything about dancing, but I know it will not come to such excesses here.

*Colonel Crawford:* Now, I noticed in your prospectus that you are the producer of "The Light of Asia."

A. Not the film, but the stage play. It is mentioned there.

Q. I misunderstood it. You spoke, when talking of the possibility of a central studio, of the necessity for considering provincial requirements. I take it that with your knowledge of the industry, you would say that no studio is bound to sit in one place—it could go all over India to take these pictures. The personnel and the camera could go all over India.

A. That is not the studio.

Q. What do you consider is the studio?

A. The studio is the permanent laboratory with the stage and platform. That is the studio.

Q. That, so far as pictures are concerned, might be anywhere? Provincial requirements do not necessitate the laboratory being in a particular place?

A. That is the expensive part of it. If part of the picture is taken in Chittagong and part in Bombay, it becomes very expensive. If half the picture is taken in Shillong and the other half in Delhi at your studio, it becomes very expensive.

Q. I do not quite follow. Your cameras and arc-lamps can be taken.

A. Arc-lamps cannot be taken.

Q. I think there are portable ones.

A. Yes, but they are a very expensive affair.

Q. But they are available to go to any province for the provincial atmosphere if necessary. It is not quite as set in one place as sometimes one is inclined to picture it—a central studio?

A. Where will you make your interiors?

Q. That will be in the studio.

A. If your studio is in Delhi and for your externals you have to go to Chittagong, and then send it over to be developed in Delhi, just consider the expense. It will be prohibitive from a commercial point of view.

Q. I understand there is a producing company in Calcutta to day which sends its films to be developed in Europe.



A. Not the story?

Q. The story too.

A. I cannot understand that.

Q. So the expenses cannot be so heavy. I only wanted to know whether you felt that this necessity for provincial indiosyncracies in public utility films definitely requires us having a provincial studio or whether we can get it in the central studio.

A. It will be much more expensive.

Q. It will be more expensive; but then you will have to have nine studios, one in each province.

A. What is the harm?

Mr. Green: If each is to cost 1½ lakhs?

A. I do not take it as so.

Colonel Crawford: And each one need not have full time work.

A. Your proposition was that it could be rented out to private people.

Q. Yes, in the spare time.

Mr. Green: But that is not an essential part of the scheme.

Colonel Crawford: I was just wondering whether even if we would have enough money for one decent studio, it would be possible to have money for nine. I do not want to insist on the central studio. I am trying to find out from you whether it is essential to provincial requirements definitely to rule out a central studio.

A. I did not speak of provincial studios from the point of view of provincialism. My idea was that it will facilitate the work very much. But the Government also may develop enough activity to keep their studio busy manufacturing films of all-India concern.

Mr. Green: I want to put you one or two questions on the point Colonel Crawford just raised. I want to put them to you because you have expert knowledge. Many witnesses to whom we have suggested the possibility of a central studio do not seem to realise how much modern film work is done in a studio. I gather from you that more and more work is done in a studio, with outdoor scenes being taken less and less and even when they are taken artificial light is used to supplement or correct the sun in many instances.

A. Well, in quite a number of instances.

Q. In the most modern production. If we had a central studio the same thing would hold good, most of your film of whatever nature it was would be produced in the studio—say even your Cholera one which you were talking about and you made the interesting suggestion that the Cholera film might be made an All-India film. It has puzzled us how that film could be made an All-India film. I take it a good deal of your film would be made in the studio?

A. Yes, but I will say that the local colouring should be taken outside in this country.

Q. In any such film, I take it, there will be a good many interior scenes?

A. A good many.

Q. They will have to be taken in the studio?

A. Yes.

Q. If you take away from a particular film all the parts that can be or should be, on the most modern practice, taken in the studio, will it leave very much for open-air work?

A. You want to eliminate the interior absolutely?

Q. Not at all. I want to know when you have taken the interiors in the studio, you have taken all parts which can be and should be, according to the most modern practice, done in the studio; and after that, how much will be left for open air work?

A. In pictures which call for rivers and boats going over them, a very great deal will have to be done outside.

**Q.** It is not possible to restrict them to the studio? For instance, I understand the Grand Canal at Venice has been successfully produced in an American studio?

**A.** But at tremendous expense and the zig-zagging has been done in such a way that the boat is kept in motion, as you see in Exhibitions they make tunnels and other things. But Dr. Bentley puts it that several cases of cholera have been put down to the fact that the boat was kept going on, and the vomit thrown into the river, while some way further down the river somebody was filling up water from the river and catching the germs. Now to make that effective you have to catch the boat coming down the river.

**Q.** You can take your camera man and take those pictures in any part of India?

**A.** No, not so.

**Q.** I take it you are a great believer in the future of the Indian film industry?

**A.** Yes, I am.

**Q.** And you have proposed the flotation of a company and give us very interesting figures. You are quite satisfied that provided the necessary capital is forthcoming, and you do not ask very much, good profits are certain to be made?

**A.** That is my conviction.

**Q.** That being the case why exactly do you need Government assistance?

**A.** Because of some failures of banks and other things people are very shy of putting money into anything. If there is some Government guarantee or a guarantee of some sort, then capital will come forward.

**Q.** The same, I take it, will apply to any industry?

**A.** I have no interest in any other industry.

**Q.** But capital is shy generally; other industries may also find it difficult to raise the necessary capital and apply to Government for assistance.

**A.** It may be so; it is not my province to talk about other industries.

**Q.** Do you think that the film industry is of such importance that it has a prior claim on the Government?

**A.** I do.

**Q.** On what ground exactly?

**A.** I have given the ground in my articles in the papers. Before we have funds for free and compulsory education in this country it will take a long time.

**Q.** But the view has been expressed to us that this is essentially a luxury industry. That is what I want to get at?

**A.** Why are you putting on censors? Why are you so concerned about the films spoiling people's morals and ideas?

**Q.** We also have to have police and courts of justice. I take it you are not proposing they should be abolished?

**A.** But then you know there are some people who value them.

**Q.** Anything that may be a potent source of evil has to be regulated?

**A.** Unless you are cognizant of its potency and power you will not be able to do it.

**Q.** I take it you consider motoring a luxury?

**A.** Not at all; it is very much of a commercial factor.

**Q.** Private cars?

**A.** Even that; the doctor without a private car will not get any business at all.

**Q.** But there are other people?

**A.** But commercial people have to get about fast too in order to get business.

**Q.** And even gentlemen of leisure? Should there be no control of that? Should there be no police control, no control over drivers? Public safety and health must obviously be looked after?

**A.** When a thing becomes powerful; only one or two cars don't matter.

**Q.** I am trying to get at why the cinema industry is so important. I can suggest an answer but I do not want to put it into your mouth.

**A.** It is of the biggest educative value.

**Q.** You consider the cinema has an educative value?

**A.** Very much so.

**Q.** When you say that, are you referring to films of deliberately educational nature?

**A.** Every story has an educational value.

**Q.** What is the proportion of directly educational films, do you imagine, of those that are shown in cinema houses to-day?

**A.** You mean average pictures shown?

**Q.** You say that entertainment pictures have a certain value. What proportion of pictures have a directly educational value?

**A.** Historical pictures and health pictures and disease pictures.

**Q.** How many health pictures and disease pictures are exhibited in a commercial way?

**A.** As yet it has not been tackled from that point of view.

**Q.** You think if the supply were there entertainment houses would exhibit such films?

**A.** Why not? "Vanity Fair" was very popular.

**Q.** I am afraid I don't know what "Vanity Fair" was. I do not understand how "Vanity Fair" compares with a film about cholera and disease.

**A.** Well, the film shows a respectable lady going down through disease and drink.

**Q.** I am afraid I have not seen the film. I know a book of that name.

**A.** It is the same thing.

**Q.** We were talking about the more directly educative films, what the Chairman calls public utility films.

**A.** As yet interesting dramas have not yet been made for that purpose.

**Q.** And it is on that ground that you think it is an industry which should be supported by the State?

**A.** Not only from that point of view but from the general point of view. The cinema is the biggest medium of education which at present can be utilised in India.

**Q.** One other point. You want the tariff on Empire films raised 100 per cent.

**A.** As far as possible.

**Q.** That is you want to raise the present duty to Rs. 75 per 1,000 feet?

**A.** I would not object to that.

**Q.** It is not a question of not objecting to it; just now I understood you to say you wanted it.

**A.** Yes, I wanted it for the benefit of our own Indian initiative.

**Q.** You also want the duty on raw films abolished?

**A.** Yes, and to do everything possible to encourage the industry.

**Q.** You know the special policy of the Government of India, and I think I may say of the Legislature, as regards protection, that it should be discriminating protection?

**A.** Yes; I don't quite understand the value or significance of it.

**Q.** I understand the theory beneath discriminating protection is that Government may properly protect a nascent industry that should give up protection as soon as it can stand on its own legs.

A. Quite so; I have mentioned that in my articles.

*Chairman:* Where are these articles?

A. I thought your department would have taken cuttings of them.

Q. Never mind what should have been done. Can you give us these cuttings?

A. I shall have to look into my file.

*Mr. Green:* You like the principle of discriminating protection then. Now supposing we come to the conclusion that the industry is already on its own legs—in Bombay for instance. Do you think the legislature would agree to any protection?

A. If a competent body decided on it, but I don't know.

*Sir Huroon Jaffer:* You know Professor Mookherjee of the Lucknow University. He said you have been to America. Were you ever there?

A. Yes.

Q. Were there any other students there?

A. There cannot have been, for the reason that those business are absolutely monopolistic. They don't allow foreigners at all.

Q. That is your experience; there is lots of jealousy?

A. Yes.

Q. And they won't show their trade secrets to others?

A. Very little.

Q. So it is useless sending our students there to learn anything?

A. At present I understand the Columbia University has opened a branch in cinema training and they allow students from abroad to it. As it is a University concern, I do not think there is any objection.

Q. Indians will be allowed?

A. I think so.

### **Written Statement of Mr. R. G. A. ALGOET, Les Universités Cinégraphiques, Brussels, dated the 5th December 1927.**

I venture to enclose herewith three documents for submission to your Committee of Inquiry:—

- (1) Replies to certain question in your published questionnaire.
- (2) Statement regarding Educational Films.
- (3) Draft prospectus of a suggested Educational Film Society for India.

I should explain that I have had practical experience of the production, organization, and exhibition of educational films in Europe, in connection with the Belgian Film University, and I have come to India at my own expense to explore the possibility of forming a similar organization, without lucrative aim, in India—somewhat on the lines suggested in the enclosed draft prospectus, which is modelled upon the methods successfully used in Europe.

I shall be grateful if you will give me the opportunity of giving evidence before your committee when it visits Calcutta.

May I be permitted to add one word of a more personal kind? I should be glad to have the advice of members of your committee as to the possibility of the scheme I am proposing for India. If it is thought possible for a scheme on these lines to be brought into operation at a reasonably early date, I am prepared to place my services and my experience at the disposal of the promoters and I should be glad to be put in touch with persons or institutions likely to be interested in such a venture.

## Enclosure 1.

## REPLIES TO CERTAIN QUESTIONS IN YOUR PUBLISHED QUESTIONNAIRE.

*Introductory.*—I am a cinematograph technician, having had training in Belgium and France, and having acquired experience of the film industry by travel in Germany, Italy, England and France.

For the last two years I have been applying my technical knowledge in the Belgium Film University—now becoming an international organization—especially in the production and publication of educational and scientific films, and the successful exhibition of purely educational film shows.

I came to India entirely on my own account with a double purpose, (1) to propagate and make known the new system, which operates successfully in Europe, of exhibiting purely educational film shows, (2) to produce in India educational and scientific films. I have been studying these two questions for the last five months, and I am every day more convinced that educational films may be made a success in India.

8. I am not satisfied with the Indian film production. In historical films the history is often good, but the production is marred by artistic and technical defects. To remedy this, Indian technicians should work in co-operation with European or American technicians so that Indian ideas may be conserved and may at the same time be made intelligible to European and American audiences. That films so produced would be successful is proved by the fact that the public in Europe and America asks for diversity in films—new sentiments, new actors, new tastes, new scenery. Why do American firms train and employ dogs and other animals as actors, but to be able to present something new? And in this respect is any animal a better actor than the elephant and the cobra, and where are they and their trainers to be found but in India? What has been said of the need for improving Indian film production from an artistic point of view, applies equally in the matter of technical improvement, with the further requirement of a modern outfit.

11. (b) If any films produced in India have been misunderstood abroad, it is because the necessity of adaptation to European requirements, artistic and technical, has been overlooked. If any films made abroad misrepresent Indian civilization, it is because the European technician did not understand Indian civilization and had not the help of an Indian technician—the latter to put reality and truth into the films, the former to adapt this reality and truth in such a way as to make it understood rightly by Europeans and Americans.

13. To encourage the Indian film industry, taxes on raw film and on machinery should be reduced or remitted entirely.

14. An increased production of films, at any rate of educational films, will necessarily follow an increased use of the cinema in education. For, if the films are to be understood by Indian people, they must as far as possible be made by educationists of Indian race, and films that can not be made in this country, *e.g.*, geographical films of other lands, should at least undergo adaptation to suit them for exhibition in India.

I do not know whether educational films are much asked for in India, but there is a widespread desire for instruction, and education by films is everywhere recognized to be the most effective way of interesting all types of audience, whether educated or illiterate.

15. Conditions in this country are favourable to the development of an Indian film producing industry for the following reasons. (a) The need for Indian films in India is great. (b) Indian theatrical art approaches more nearly to the "silent art" of the cinema than European theatrical art does. (c) The life of the country people, their customs, existing architecture, etc., lend themselves to the production without expense of historical films of high value.

16. Indian producers and directors are fit and, I think, can be relied upon—those that are in touch with the latest methods. Indian actors and

actresses are good, but films produced in India show that they are lacking in training. Directors should make a point of insisting upon sufficient training. Some scenario writers are good, and should, with more experience, be able to produce films with a world-wide appeal, provided a proper adaptation is secured for films intended for European countries. All these points are of no value unless care is given to secure proper manipulation of the films and artistic work on the part of the photographer. To that end highly experienced workmen must be employed, and up to date outfit must be used, in order that, where the necessary conditions for producing an artistic negative are not available, skilful craftsmanship may be able to make good the deficiency.

19. The Indian film industry is at a disadvantage as compared with other countries for this reason, that in India raw film has to be imported, and is thus not only dearer but also a month old on arrival, while in other producing countries it is manufactured on the spot and is both cheap and fresh.

21. In any proposal for action by the state, a clear distinction should be drawn between story films manufactured as an industry and intended to be exploited for profit, and scientific and educational films which have quite a different object. The first come into existence with a view to making money and to meet a popular demand for recreation. The latter come into existence, not as a means of money making but for the sake of science and education, and as a means of communicating knowledge more easily and clearly than a book does. For producing the former only the film technician is needed, while for producing the latter the film technician needs the help of the scientist or the educational expert, bringing to bear upon the work a much greater degree of skill and knowledge. The educational purpose of the films makes them of much greater value to society. For these reasons, in contemplating action by the state, it is important that industrial films should be considered separately.

#### Enclosure 2.

#### STATEMENT FOR THE INDIAN CINEMATOGRAPH ENQUIRY COMMITTEE.

##### *Educational Films.*

Proposal for forming in India an *Educational Film Society*, operating without lucrative aim, for placing before the public the best educational films.

The cinema is itself an attraction, and film lectures ought therefore to be much more popular than any other form of lectures. Why is it that such shows are rarely if ever provided? The failure of the educational film to become popular is due to many causes, but chiefly to the fact that the programmes offered have been monotonous. Long experience shows that for an educational film show, four or five reels devoted to one subject are fatiguing, uninteresting and unattractive. This fact has been recognized by industrial firms which employ the film for advertising purposes, such films being made as short as possible (1 to 1½ hour).

How can educational shows be made popular and successful? By introducing diversity in the programmes, and so holding the interest of the public. This can be done only in one way, by acquiring a series of films and intermixing them. This involves not one but many shows, a capital for acquiring the films, and co-operation for arranging the shows.

In Europe this has already been accomplished by the Belgian Film University. The work of this organization was cited as an example by the European Conference at Basel for promoting education through films. It has become international, for negotiations are going on in at least ten countries for establishing societies modelled on the Belgian Film University.

Mr. G. Lanloy, director of the Belgian Film University, conceived the idea of forming the present society in 1925. It was at first suggested to

him that he should give mixed shows, two or three educational films varied with adventures and dramatic films. He rejected this proposal as unworthy, however, believing that the educational film has a great future, and is too rich in material and in interest to be mixed up with unreal and imaginary stories. After one-and-a-half years work, collecting 140 reels of films (20 programmes each containing 7 reels) from all over the world, reconstructing, tilting them, etc., the programmes were composed as follows.

The original plan of the Belgian Film University was that the first year shows should be given in four towns only, but so great was the success of the enterprise that after five months fourteen different towns had asked and obtained the shows, while the season 1927-28 begins with shows at 32 new places and a weekly bulletin circulating to all the members.

The success achieved by educational films in Europe encourages one to expect that the same success could be attained in India by a scheme planned on right lines. An Educational Film Society run as a public service and not with a view to earning profit could cover its expenses by charging a very low price for admission to the shows (As. 2½ for adults and An. 1 for school children), which would insure the popularity of these educational exhibitions. The society could extend its operations to any town which guaranteed a minimum attendance, while for illiterate audiences special provision would be made.

A second great task of the society would be the production in India of educational and scientific films. In this task I am ready to contribute my technical and scientific knowledge, in co-operation with educational and scientific experts in India. I would suggest that for the first year the aim should be to produce 30 or 35 reels (5 shows) dealing with the geography and ethnography of India, hygiene, agriculture, industry, etc. Ultimately the rate of production should be increased to 60 reels (or 10 shows) per year, and the shows should provide a mixed programme of Indian and foreign films.

Enclosure 3.

## PROSPECTUS.

### THE EDUCATIONAL FILM SOCIETY OF INDIA.

#### *For the Exhibition and Production of Educational Films.*

In view of the widely expressed desire in India for a better type of film than is provided in the ordinary cinema shows, the public will be glad to know of a society which is being formed with the double object of (1) providing cheap and popular exhibitions of educational films collected from all parts of the world, and (2) undertaking the adaptation of such films to Indian requirements and the production in India of new educational films dealing with subjects of special Indian interest. The society will accept no profit from its operations, but after defraying the cost of the exhibitions will devote any balance remaining from membership fees to the work of adapting and producing films for India.

1. *Exhibitions.*—It is proposed to organize in cities and towns of India branches of the Educational Film Society, each with a minimum membership of not less than..... This organization will make possible for each branch a series of 25 shows per year to be held in schools or other suitable buildings. Each show will last for two hours and will present six different reels, and one reel for recreation (cartoon, length 5 mins.) thus securing variety of interest. A selection of 200 reels will be available during the first year dealing among other subjects with the following:—

History, Physics, Industry, Politics.

Geography, Astronomy, Transport, Education,

Chemistry, Natural Science, Agriculture, Art, etc., etc.

2. *Production of new Films.*—Educational films imported from abroad will require editing in order to adapt them to the requirements of Indian audiences. For an educational programme suited to India, however, imported films are not enough. India presents a field of inexhaustible interest for illustration by means of educational films, and it is proposed to devote the proceeds of membership fees, after paying the expenses of exhibition and adaptation of films, to the production in India of new and original films of Indian subjects.

In order to have the benefit of these shows in your town a minimum number of members must enrol. Fees will not be collected until the full number of members has been enrolled in that town.

#### *Membership Form.*

Please enrol my name as a member of the E. F. S. of I. and secure me a Supporting Membership Ticket for 25 shows at Rs. 50.

Reserved-seat Membership ticket for 25 shows at Rs. 12.

Membership ticket for 25 shows at Rs. 4.

Name

Address

“Supporting” members are those who are willing to contribute a larger fee in order to make up the loss on As. 2½ and An. 1 tickets.

### **\*Oral Evidence of Mr. R. G. A. ALGOET of Les Universités Cinégraphiques, Brussels, on Wednesday, the 14th December 1927.**

*Chairman:* Mr. Algoet, we have been through your statement with interest. I just want to know a few facts from you. You are an expert in this line, I take it?

A. In educational films, yes; although I have taken a whole course of instruction in everything connected with the industry of films I have only specialised in educational films.

Q. Now there is one thing on which I want to get information; probably you may know about it. Are there any countries in Europe where educational films are produced by Government? What do they do in Germany or France.

A. I am not cognizant of any Government producing educational films.

Q. Which is the country which produces the best educational films.

A. The best educational films are produced in England, in America, in Germany and France. Italy has produced them also; and so has Spain. But England has produced a good deal and America has many also, specially films of geography. Germany has many films also. As a matter of fact in 1919 when I came out from Europe there was a German technician coming out to make a film on Tea.

Q. That embraces ancient history, navigation, every kind of subject connected with the spread of knowledge?

A. Yes, you have natural science, chemistry; you have special films now with microscopic views which make the films much more interesting.

Q. How long have you been in India?

A. Only 5 or 6 months. I came for propaganda work. I was at the last Conference of Basel where 155 technicians from 17 European countries were present in April last.

Q. Was it the unanimous opinion of the Conference there that educational films are of great value to a nation?

A. Oh yes, that is why they have united themselves now in a permanent commission.



**Q.** But what was their opinion as regards the value of the film in purely educational institutions such as schools and colleges?

**A.** Of course the film has got a disadvantage, the film is too expensive to give education by means of it only. But as a supplement it is one of the best educations.

**Q.** Was there any doubt cast upon the value of the film in schools and colleges in order to supplement the education given in schools and colleges? Was there any doubt expressed as to the value of the film as a means of supplementing education?

**A.** No. In some European countries, after 10 years, all the schools will be provided with the necessary installations for giving film shows of their own.

**Q.** That is the movement in Europe?

**A.** Yes. 10 years further they will come to that stage.

**Q.** When each school will have its own equipment?

**A.** Not only that; they will have films also on each subject. The film is more and more a help to education and a greater need is felt every year for educational films.

**Q.** Now in those countries, take Belgium, France, Germany, Italy and other countries like that which are using educational films, was it necessary to produce films each in its own country or did they get them from other countries.

**A.** That is one point which was discussed at the last Conference of the Society of Nations. It was said that scientific films can be centralised, can be produced in a certain place, whether it be England, France or Germany. Scientific films can be produced in one place but they say purely educational films should be produced in the country or if they cannot be produced, at least they should undergo a certain amount of re-editing because many of these films are made under the demand of a technician who does not always understand specially when there is a great difference between one people and another.

**Q.** You mean it does not have the same effect on their minds. When they see their own surroundings in the picture it has more effect?

**A.** That is what has been done in Belgium. The films were taken, gathered from all over the world but.....

**Q.** Alterations have been made in them to suit local conditions?

**A.** Yes; they have been entirely cut up and reconstructed.

**Q.** They call it re-editing I think?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** I am glad to have your advice and we shall be very thankful to have your advice in the matter. Do you think that if India were to go in for educational films she should go about utilising as much as she can of foreign films and producing her own films mostly?

**A.** I have followed some of these questions in the papers already. It has been said you should have only Indian films or films produced in India. I feel that is impossible.

**Q.** You must supplement Indian production with foreign production in educational matters and re-edit them for the purposes of India?

**A.** Yes; but I think India will certainly herself produce a great amount of educational films which will be highly appreciated in Europe.

**Q.** You think so?

**A.** That is the reason I came here.

**Q.** Do you think educational films produced in India will have a value in other countries, in Europe. What is it we can give? What is it you have in mind that India can give to the rest of the world in the matter of education?

**A.** You have films of architecture, for instance; then films of zoology.

Q. You don't think such things as natural scenery, geography, probably the Himalayan regions and such other things will have immense value?

A. Yes, they will.

Q. I quite realise that. And now have you estimated the cost of a studio for such a purpose here?

A. If the studio is made to produce educational films only, the price of such a studio will be much less than that of one which deals with other kinds of films.

Q. You mean entertainment films?

A. Yes. In the case of educational films you know what is needed. You do not want any studio except perhaps a room for microscopic purposes. It is only a laboratory and printing machines which are required.

Q. You think the conditions in India are favourable for producing such films?

A. I am not very much experienced in the climate here, but I think the light here is very suitable for making films. Very often in Europe we have to get electric lights. Very often it is impossible to take views there and in the dry season and the cold season it is impossible to work outside, whereas it is not so here.

Q. Do you think it would be useful to send students from here to other countries to learn technique and other things, or would you prefer sending for experts from abroad to train people here?

A. Of course, both would be useful if it is desired to have a film industry here.

Q. What does Belgium do in that respect?

A. Belgium is very poor in the film industry.

Q. What does it do in order to help the industry?

A. For educational films a society has sprung up in 1925.

Q. What are they doing to get their expert knowledge?

A. They produce some films, not very many, perhaps 6 or 7, especially films on industry, science and so on.

Q. Does she send for experts from outside?

A. No. I have myself made a film on the geography of Belgium, the history of sugar, etc. I got my training in France and England and I have been to Italy—to Gomo.

Q. You got your training abroad?

A. Yes.

Q. On your own account?

A. Yes.

Q. Not that the Government sent you?

A. No. The Director of the Film University was one of my personal friends and that is how it came about that I learnt the art.

Q. Probably you want to be in touch with some people. I do not know if you are aware of the gentleman who has just given evidence, he wanted to start a company for this purpose. You want it to be "without lucrative aim". You think it must be an organisation which does not look for profit but merely considers it a duty to impart knowledge?

A. Yes. If educational films are produced for profit the first aim will be no more science or knowledge but it becomes the film itself.

Q. I do not think we can help you in exploring the possibilities of such a scheme, but we want your advice more in order to make a recommendation to the Government on this important subject.

This Belgium Film University—what does it do, does it confer any degrees?

A. No. That is a question which has been put to me several times by several people. It is merely an educational society.

**Q.** It is a voluntary society in order to encourage the production of educational films?

**A.** And especially exhibition, because up till now the exhibition of educational films has been a failure as the films were always exhibited in a series of 4 or 5 or 6 reels. If one film was exhibited in one show it is not a great success. But if there is an educational society it can acquire the necessary films for several shows and they can intermix them. It will show a variety of films which will of course create interest. If you have films shown on only one subject it is too monotonous and does not excite the curiosity of the people, and it is too long.

**Q.** What is it you want done?

**A.** I would like to get into touch with those people who have already these ideas, who are working already in this line, or who have already started the exhibition of educational films. To apply the scheme the method of producing these films is new.

**Q.** If there are any associations you want to get into touch with them?

**A.** Yes, or if there are people interested directly I would like to get into touch with them. If there are any institutions interested in making educational or scientific films I would like to help them.

**Q.** You are not here on any business development?

**A.** No.

**Q.** But simply on your own account to do good work here?

**A.** Not merely to do good work, but I would like to make my name in making films.

**Q.** Have you got into touch with producers here?

**A.** No.

**Q.** Have you been to the studios here?

**A.** No.

**Q.** Have you seen any Indian films?

**A.** I have seen a few.

**Q.** You consider there are potentialities in them for good pictures?

**A.** From what I have seen the latest methods are not used and the thing which is coming more and more into existence is to produce films without titles.....

**Q.** Will the Indian films have a commercial value in Europe?

**A.** Films coming out without up-to-date technique are certainly behind and people are asking more and more for newer and better things.

*Mr. Green:* You have been five months in India?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** What parts of India have you been in?

**A.** I arrived in Colombo. I stayed for a day or two in Madras, Madura, Trichinopoly, and then I came to Calcutta.

**Q.** Do you know any of the Indian vernaculars?

**A.** I started at once. I have started learning Hindi.

**Q.** You did not start Hindi in Madras?

**A.** No. But I was only for a short time in Madras.

**Q.** Do you know anything of the different religions of India?

**A.** From the first day of my arrival here I have been buying books and studying all these things.

**Q.** And customs?

**A.** In five months you cannot know very much. From the first day I have been in touch with the Y. M. C. A., and they have given me a good number of books where I can study the language, Hindi.....

**Q.** Have you any idea of how many languages there are in India?

A. Yes. I have heard that there are several hundreds.

Q. Probably dialects, but I think there are at least 30 distinct languages. I am not trying to confuse you, but I am putting these questions to indicate to you that your scheme may have probably to meet with difficulties in this country, if I may so call it, which are not paralleled by any experience elsewhere.

A. I realise that.

Q. I do not think it is necessary to ask you in how many towns you think it would be possible to get subscribers for Rs. 50 or even for Rs. 12.

A. Rs. 50 I have put down only for those people who would like to do work.

Q. You have not yet gone into that?

A. No. It is only a scheme.

*Colonel Crawford:* Can you give us an idea of the cost of machinery which an educational studio requires,—not the studio itself, but the latest up-to-date cameras, developing, printing machines, etc.

A. I cannot say offhand, but if you like I can give you the information to-morrow or the day after—the machinery which is required to put that laboratory in order, camera, printing machines.....

Q. Are lights?

A. They are not so much required for educational films.

Q. But you have information of the cost of all these things.

A. Yes.

*Chairman:* Will you kindly send it on to-morrow.

A. Yes. I have considered the conditions here. They are certainly favourable for making certain kinds of films. For instance, adventure films can be made here. I have seen many of these films in France. They have to produce absolutely the whole of the film in a small studio. You have for instance in Gomo, what they have there is very small. That is a great difficulty. If you will allow me to say so, I would condemn small studios and I would rather have a big one because there are so many advantages from that. Outside sceneries are certainly at an advantage in India because you have clearness of the light here. You are sure of the weather, during the cold as well as the hot season. You can produce special sceneries in the rainy season and so on.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* Have you got a copy of the aims and objects of your University with you?

A. In French.

Q. Have you got one now?

A. No. I can send it to-morrow.

Q. Have you got a copy of the proceedings of the European Conference which you have just mentioned?

A. That is the Conference at Basel. The second one will take place in Rome. I have not got a copy of those proceedings. I have to write to Europe for it. I can get you a copy from there.

*Chairman:* Is it in French?

A. It may be in Italian as the second one is going to be held in Rome.

Q. Do you know if there is an English version of it?

A. I think there must be one.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* You came here at your own expense?

A. Yes.

Q. For charitable or commercial purposes?

A. For educational purposes.

Q. For the sake of business?

A. To make a name.

**Q.** Not to make money?

**A.** I am not going to work for nothing.

**Q.** Have you seen Madans here?

**A.** Not yet.

**Q.** You intend seeing them?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Is there any university in your country where there is a course in cinema industry?

**A.** No. The high schools and universities have their own installations.

**Q.** Do you mean to say that the cinema is used for instruction in the class room?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** We were told by the heads of two departments here that the magic lantern is the best thing?

**A.** It may be.

**Q.** Don't you use magic lanterns in schools?

**A.** Yes. They are not economical. They were certainly very good before the film came into existence. There is no life, there is nothing in the magic lantern. It is the movement which creates an interest in the subject.

**Q.** Have you produced any films since your arrival in India?

**A.** No.

**Q.** Have you brought any ready made films with you of an educational nature from Belgium?

**A.** No. I have a list of films which are used in the Belgium Film University.

**Q.** Have you produced any films yourself in Belgium?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** You have not brought them out here?

**A.** No.

### **Written Statement of Mr. DHIRENDRA NATH GANGAPADHYAYA, Film Producer and Dramatic Director, Calcutta.**

#### **INTRODUCTORY.**

1. I am producing films for the last ten years. It is with my effort I started the Indo-British Film Co. in Calcutta. I was the Pioneer to introduce "Indian Comedy Films". I have had practical experience as a Producer, Director and as a Cinema actor.

#### **GENERAL.**

(a) The educated class frequent cinemas more than the illiterates.

(b) In Calcutta specially, the attendance of literate class are on the increase.

(1) In Calcutta—Educated Class, 75 per cent.

In Bombay—Educated Class, 50 per cent.

In Madras—Educated Class, 40 per cent.

The above statement based on personal experience I had while exhibiting my productions.

(c) Generally the audience consists of adolescents of impressionable age.

## PART I

*Film Industry in India.*

3. Religious Indian subjects are liked by all, educated or illiterates. Then comes social Indian pictures of famous Indian authors.

4. Only a few exhibitors who have no producing concerns of their own, are anxious to obtain Indian pictures for their houses but they cannot always secure them. Moreover they are more expensive to hire and all exhibitors cannot afford to show them.

5. Only a few films are produced and they are quite inadequate to meet the public demand. But they are superfluous in the eye of big exhibitors with producing studios.

(a) Not of good quality, but the quality is improving.

(b) They are very popular.

(c) It is very profitable to show Indian Films. There are many successful Indian Productions—

1. Birth of Sree Krishna.

2. England Returned.

3. Lankadahan.

4. Jaidev.

5. Krishna Kanta's Will, etc., etc.

6. (a) Yes.

(b) Mythological would appeal more than anything else.

(1) The educated class also like social pictures of famous Indian authors.

7. There are no difficulties in obtaining suitable films for exhibition to the British and Indian Troops. But in a small cantonment exhibitors generally show old 3rd class films, as it does not pay them to spend more.

8. No.

(b) In my opinion a great impetus to the industry would be given by forming a British Empire Cinema Syndicate with a view to opening show houses in all important towns and to pass certificates to the produced films of approved standard and also compel other exhibitors to show a certain per cent. of these approved films in their houses. This will break monopoly and create considerable encouragement for the capitalist to invest their money in producing concern.

9. There are good films, but there is monopoly of supply of films as well as in exhibition of films.

10. As far as I know it does not exist.

11. No, my suggestions made under No. 8 (b) of your questionnaire will eliminate this difficulty.

12. It does not handicap the exhibitors.

13. Raw films and other ingredients should be duty free. American films should have slightly higher duty on them, so that the British Empire film industry may receive a portion of the film demand.

14. Yes. But there is no demand from the public for such films. They should be used purely for education purposes.

15. Yes. There is a great demand for Indian productions, but such enterprise must be distributed in almost all provinces of India as the production of one province may not be appreciated in other provinces. They are sometimes as foreign to them as American or English films.

16. Yes. In some provinces they are making good strides towards progress, but every such enterprise is handicapped by the limited area of its utility.

17. Yes, if conditions of monopoly disappears.

18. Such as forming a Central body to pass Indian productions of standard quality and enforce their exhibition.

19. Considerably cheaper. Films produced at a nominal cost may capture the public fancy more than the expensive films.

20. My proposal involves capital expenditure but sufficient return can be obtained by such a Syndicate and will certainly become a source of income. That will justify the initial expenditure.

21. A very good proposal. The same agency or Syndicate should include the items suggested by me.

*Films of the British Commonwealth.*

22. Yes.

(a)—(c) Yes.

A reduced duty on such films and a regular censor of all British films.

23. Just like the Pathe Gazette every country in the British Commonwealth should produce films of such interest and educational films and must have a fixed hiring value and it should be made compulsory for the exhibitors to show these in their houses along with the ordinary programme.

(b) This will necessarily be of mutual benefit and I do not think there will be any difficulty in coming to an understanding.

**PART II.**

*Social Aspects and Control.*

24. No.

(b) Yes, specially American productions.

(c) They are not harmful to the public and their popularity is fastly waning.

(d) (1) (2) Yes.

(e) No.

(f) Not particularly well informed on the matter to be able to cite any definite instances. There have been cases of daring Motor dacoities. But in my opinion, the war has created more harm than Cinema films in the direction.

25. No.

26. (a) Yes.

(b) Yes. The film "The Life of Lord Budha" produced by Madan Theatres was objected to by Budhists. The film was not allowed to be screened in Burma.

27. No, not to a great extent. Educated Indians know the pros and cons of Western civilization and the uneducated are simply unaffected by such shows.

(b) No.

28. No.

(a)—(b) No.

29. If there is anything improper or immoral it should be absolutely avoided. There is no ground to observe such restrictions separating films for adults and children.

30. No.

31. Yes.

33. (a) Yes.

(b) No, but this may produce scarcity of good films.

(c) Yes.

34. (a) Yes.

(2) Yes.

(3) The Central Board may have members representing each province.

4. Delhi.

(b) No.

(c) The representing official member will look to the interest.

(d) All expenditure of the present Provincial Board must be transferred..

35. Yes.

(a) A wholetime experienced Censor Officer would be better. The Advisory Board may have officials as well as non-officials.

(b) Must have some knowledge of film productions.

36. (b) Film synopsis should be circulated and the opinion of each member must be obtained from all of them. Then where any objection or doubtful points are raised, the wholetime experienced Officer should see the film and explain such points to the members concerned.

37. (a) Yes.

(b) No.

38. Yes. "Turki Hoor" has been passed by the Bengal Board of Censors but objected to by the Bombay Board of Censors.

40. No need for any restrictions.

41. Western films are not produced for India only. They follow their natural tendency in the production and India simply exhibits what is in vogue in Europe. Films shown in London are generally exhibited in India after about 3 to 5 months.

42—43. No

44. The trade in India is too young to consider these questions at present.

45—46. No.

**Oral Evidence of Mr. DHIRENDRA NATH GANGAPADHYAYA,  
Film Producer and Dramatic Director, on Thursday, the 15th  
December 1927.**

*Chairman :* You say you are producing films?

A. Yes.

Q. Are you now producing?

A. I have stopped producing at present.

Q. When did you cease producing?

A. I have ceased producing since 1925.

Q. When was your last production?

A. 1924.

Q. You have not produced any film after 1924?

A. No.

Q. Were you doing it alone or in conjunction with anybody else?

A. Alone.

Q. How many films did you produce?

A. 14.

Q. What was your trade name?

A. The Lotus Film Company.

Q. What sort of films did you produce?

A. First I produced "England—Returned", a comedy drama at Calcutta, I collected a good amount from the partners. I had 3 partners in the Indo-British Film Company.

Q. It does not now exist?

A. No.



Q. Was it a registered company?

A. It was registered but not a limited company.

Q. A registered partnership?

A. Yes.

Q. What was the capital?

A. We invested a lakh.

Q. And you were able to have a studio and all that?

A. Yes.

Q. And all that is gone?

A. Yes, all gone.

Q. Were you there between 1922 and 1924?

A. No, I was with them only for one year. Within a year we produced 3 pictures, including "England—Returned". Those three pictures have now been purchased by Madan.

Q. That company went into liquidation in one year?

A. No, not liquidation. There were 3 partners. I went to the Hyderabad State and I started there the Lotus Film Company. I was sole proprietor of that and I produced there with the help of the Nizam's Government 10 films. Help means the use of the palace and so on.

Q. You mean they placed facilities, not that they gave you financial help?

A. Yes.

Q. Were they all social dramas?

A. Social as well as mythological.

Q. You have a list of the films?

A. Not here, but they include such things as "The Step-mother" which was based on the Bengali drama, by Amrita Lal Bose "Yayati," "Hara Gouri," "Marriage Tonic," "The Lady Teacher," etc.

Q. Do you mean that these were comedies of your own composition?

A. My own.

Q. "England Returned" was also your own?

A. It was the first comedy I produced.

Q. You produced alone?

A. No, both of us produced, myself and Mr. Laharry.

Q. Where is he now?

A. He is the manager of Globe Theatre.

Q. Did he also go to Hyderabad with you?

A. No.

Q. And were they all popular?

A. "England Returned" was very popular.

Q. You made money over it?

A. Yes.

Q. On all these pictures you must have made money?

A. Yes.

Q. How many weeks did they run?

A. Three weeks continual run here, and in Bombay we sold it for Rs. 22,000 to K. D. Bros.

Mr. Green: What did it cost you to produce?

A. Some Rs. 19,000 to Rs. 20,000.

Q. And you sold the Bombay rights alone for Rs. 22,000?

A. Yes.

Chairman: And it ran for three months here?

A. Yes, continually. And after that we sold it to the Madan Theatres who now have it.

Q. What did you get out of that?

A. I don't know; I had left by then.

Q. Laharry owned it afterwards?

A. Yes.

Q. What are you doing now?

A. I am connected with the British Empire Films, London. They purchased the Wembley concern.

Q. It must be a recent thing?

A. Yes, and they wanted to come here to produce pictures.

Q. And you are in correspondence with them?

A. I have a brother to whom I gave all my booklets and the press cuttings.

Q. Your brother is on the Royal Agricultural Commission?

A. Yes. He has been in touch with them. I was asked to go there and arrange preliminaries.

Mr. Green : To go to England?

A. Yes.

Q. Have you been to the West before?

A. No.

Chairman : I suppose you are not doing much now?

A. Nothing.

Q. Who did your photography work?

A. One was a Bangalore man, Mr. Charles; another the assistant of Madan who was here, Mr. Roy.

Q. So you managed with temporary establishment?

A. Yes.

Q. You never had any permanent establishment for producing?

A. Yes, for a period of 2 or 3 years I had a permanent establishment.

Q. Well, I mean if all the pictures proved well and attracted audiences, why did the company go into liquidation?

A. Not liquidation. Still we had financial difficulties. I couldn't go on with the producing because we found there was a monopoly here.

Q. Did you find it difficult to exhibit the pictures?

A. Yes. All producing companies find it difficult, not only myself. Most of the cinema owners here want films on such terms that we cannot give them.

Q. Did Madan exhibit your films?

A. Yes, at the Crown Theatre as well as at Bhowanipur.

Q. Exhibited all your pictures?

A. Not all, only 5 or 6 pictures.

Q. Then why do you say you found difficulty?

A. Because that is not much use. Suppose they screen my picture for, say, about 2 weeks and their own picture comes along, they will boom it.

Q. What is wrong with that, that is only natural?

A. Yes, because it is their own picture. Supposing they give 30 per cent.

Q. What terms did they exhibit your pictures on?

A. 32.

Q. They gave you 32 and they took the balance of the collection themselves?

A. Yes.

Mr. Green : They paid for the advertising?

A. They paid for the advertising.

*Chairman* : On all your pictures those were the terms?

A. Yes.

Q. And they alone exhibited them?

A. Also the Majestic Theatre, Bombay. Bombay has a better collection than Calcutta, which is only a 4th class station.

Q. You mean in your case or in all cases?

A. In all cases.

Q. You think more people go to the cinemas there or are there more theatres at your disposal there?

A. More theatres also. If we want a fixed hire they give Rs. 3,500 a week for an Indian picture.

Q. Who gave you that?

A. The Majestic Cinema.

Q. That is for a successful film?

A. They cannot give less than Rs. 3,000 or Rs. 3,500.

Q. For any film?

A. Of course they see it first and if they are satisfied.....

Q. They give you Rs. 3,000 a week?

A. Yes.

Q. And it may run to 2 or 3 weeks?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you proceed on a percentage basis in Bombay?

A. They do not give on the percentage basis to an outsider, but we would like that; it would be to our advantage.

Q. Do you think they made more than what Madan made here, the Bombay people, when they gave you Rs. 3,500. How much do you think it came to, supposing you got Rs. 3,000 or Rs. 3,500. About 32 per cent.?

A. But it comes to more.

*Mr. Green* : Supposing you had taken 32 per cent. what would you have got there?

A. I gave always on a fixed basis.

*Chairman* : But supposing you were on a percentage basis?

A. In my idea it would come to Rs. 5,000 which the Kohinoor and the Sri Krishna Company are getting now.

Q. What is your line? What are you? What have you specialised in?

A. I am the producing and dramatic director.

Q. You mean you make the story?

A. Story not often, but I am the dramatic director.

Q. You are a director?

A. Yes.

Q. You are a director of actors too?

A. I acted myself in the role part once.

Q. You both act and direct others to act?

A. Yes.

Q. I suppose you began merely as an amateur; you did not get any training?

A. I have published many books. "Expressions and Caricatures." The Times of India and all papers have published my expressions.

Q. That is all right. But you never took any training for film direction?

A. No.

Q. And Mr. Laharry your partner?

A. He was manager of Madan's Theatre.

**Q.** What was his special line?

**A.** He was business manager.

**Q.** What about the actors, where did you get them?

**A.** From here locally.

**Q.** For each film?

**A.** At that time we used to give them a monthly salary.

**Q.** Do you think you could get good actors and actresses here for film acting?

**A.** But they are not trained. We have to train them.

**Q.** Just as you trained yourself you want to train them?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** But what is the best method of training them?

**A.** It requires an institution like what I have mentioned in my statement. I propose there ought to be a syndicate like the British Empire Syndicate.

**Q.** You do not expect the British Empire to come here and train your people?

**A.** Or we can get experts from there.

**Q.** But you may get them from Germany?

**A.** We want producers, directors, etc. After all we do not know very much of this new industry.

**Q.** Therefore you want experts to come and train you here. They must be the best experts from anywhere you can get. Now what is your idea about a British Empire Film Industry. They are to build theatres and produce pictures in India?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** You want to float a company?

**A.** Yes.

*Mr. Green :* You want financial co-operation?

**A.** If the Government is behind them I do not think there will be any trouble to get the capitalists to come in.

**Q.** What is your idea. Here in answer to 7 (d) you say in your opinion a great impetus will be given by forming a British Empire cinema industry to build theatres in important towns, to pass certificates, etc. What is your idea? You want a good business concern?

**A.** Yes. Both to exhibit and to produce.

**Q.** You think some steps ought to be taken to bring about such an institution?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Don't you think films are now being produced in Bombay?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Why do you want to bring in a new concern?

**A.** We generally find in Bengal people do not want to see films of other provinces.

**Q.** But why do you want a new company to be started? Already producers in Bombay and Madras are attempting to do what they can?

**A.** They don't care for others. They are doing everything for their own pictures.

**Q.** That will be so in any trade, if a man has greater enterprise than you, he will succeed better than you?

**A.** But that means a monopoly.

**Q.** But that is so in any trade. Supposing you establish a fruit shop, the man who buys the best fruit will command the best market.

**A.** But supposing we give them a good picture, they won't treat it as they would one of their own pictures.

**Q.** You want some compulsion to exhibit Indian pictures?

**A.** Indian pictures, yes.

**Q.** And each cinema theatre should be compelled to exhibit some proportion of Indian pictures provided they are of the requisite standard, provided a common Board certifies that they are good for exhibition. Do you want a quota system introduced here as in England—is that your idea?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** But you talk of monopoly and all that. How is it a monopoly?

**A.** When they produce a film they give certain terms that we cannot get.

**Q.** Well, they are good business people, while you have no business capacity. It is a struggle for existence all the time and the best always survive.

**A.** That may be so, but it means that other capitalists won't invest their money.

**Q.** Nobody prevents them. Why don't you? I can understand your saying that you want facilities to exhibit your pictures; but what more do you want? Why is this new syndicate to be floated and kill the other concerns?

**A.** Certainly not, but to benefit all producing companies.

**Q.** You want facilities for every Indian company, you want every registered Indian company to have facilities for taking pictures?

**A.** Bombay pictures get 22 per cent. here for their production.

**Q.** If you mean the producers in Bombay, we had them before us and you don't know anything directly about them?

**A.** I was in Bombay 2 to 3 years.

**Mr. Green :** Recently?

**A.** In 1922-23.

**Q.** We were there in 1927.

**Chairman :** We heard what the Bombay producers had to say about the terms. Your information must be very ancient having regard to what is happening in Bombay to-day. You had better tell us what you know about Bengal. Well, your idea is that a British Empire Film Company should have the monopoly?

**A.** Not monopoly.

**Q.** If you want a new concern, why don't you bring it about yourself, point out its advantages and disadvantages, show a good business proposition?

**A.** My syndicate would determine the percentage or fix the hire for every station and all exhibitors.

**Q.** After all it is a question of trade, is it not? Every other trade looks after itself?

**A.** Madan's pictures cannot be shown by all exhibitors because they want Rs. 500 a week for hire, which it is impossible to collect from the stuff they give. Their terms are very high.

**Q.** Very well, why don't you start a rival theatre?

**A.** That requires financial backing.

**Q.** Provided you have sufficient security you can get financial help?

**A.** That is my idea.

**Q.** You want Government to advance loans on what security?

**A.** Not loans. If they help us.

**Mr. Green :** Why should they not help somebody else?

**Chairman :** If Government give help to an industry they must be impartial to all people employed in the industry. Why you more than Madan?

**A.** The Government could be shareholders.

**Q.** That is what you want. But why should they take shares in such an industry when there are at least 7 or 8 people in Bombay producing films. It is only in Bengal that you have not got together the money.

**A.** But they don't cater for Indian markets.

*Mr. Green:* Well, they go right up to the North-West Frontier Province; we have seen them in Peshawar. They come occasionally to Calcutta.

*Chairman:* You think in Bengal the people are incapable of putting forth industry in this connection?

*A.* Yes, to a certain extent.

*Q.* Unless there is Government aid the people are not likely to go in for this industry?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Why didn't you say so then? You want some extraneous aid in order to start the industry in this province?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* And what security do you offer? Supposing the Government thought it worthwhile to encourage any industry of this sort, supposing they make a law compelling every theatre to exhibit Indian films, supposing they give you facilities for taking your pictures, throwing open their public buildings, giving police aid in regard to traffic and roads, access to public places—what more do you want?

*A.* That is quite enough.

*Q.* Then you don't want financial aid?

*A.* If they do that, financial aid will naturally come.

*Q.* That is irrespective of new men or old men, everybody will get that aid provided it is an Indian company or an Indian partnership? Do you agree?

*A.* Yes, I agree.

*Q.* What you want is facilities and legal compulsion of the quota?

*A.* Yes. But supposing a Madan picture is wanted by anybody at some other station, they charge high terms.

*Q.* Then you want Government to control prices?

*A.* Yes.

*Mr. Green:* They will control your prices also?

*A.* Certainly.

*Chairman:* You don't agree that it should be the rule in every commodity except in times of great famine or great war—do you believe in Government controlling prices at any other time? You also advocate a higher duty on imported films?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Do you know how the prices compare so far as the exhibitor goes? Is it more costly for him to accept an Indian picture?

*A.* Certainly.

*Q.* And the foreign pictures are able to compete on better terms?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* And you say that the Indian pictures are very popular?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Do you think the exhibitor will suffer if more duty were put on foreign films?

*A.* If he get the Indian picture more freely, he will not.

*Q.* That itself will be an inducement to produce more Indian pictures; the two things put together will compel every cinema to show a certain length of Indian film provided it is passed by a Board as fit to be shown; secondly, it will discourage foreign films as much as possible by imposing a higher duty in order that they may not compete on unequal terms. Is that your point?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* You think that these two things put together and if better facilities for production are afforded, you will be satisfied. Or do you want the Government to send for experts to teach people here?

A. What I mean is that the syndicate should be like a school.

Q. You mean you want an educational studio?

A. Yes.

Q. You say that the Government should start a central studio in which they should produce films which they want for propaganda purposes and employ the necessary experts who should be available to the industry. Is that what you have in mind?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you think people in the industry will avail themselves of Government aid?

A. Yes, they will.

Q. We were told by a gentleman here that if Government starts a central institution like that, there will be suspicion that there will be greater Government control and so on?

A. I don't think so. On the other hand, people will certainly come forward and take their help.

Q. I suppose you won't mind taking their aid? You also realise that Government control will involve a certain amount of Government supervision and so on?

A. Since so many private companies have failed, I think there must be a Government institution for some time at least.

Q. What you mean is, that having regard to the past history of the industry here, unless Government comes to your aid in an indirect way, you won't be able to establish an industry here, and therefore you want Government to establish a central studio, is that so?

A. Yes.

Q. Why do you say that a higher duty should be imposed on American films? Why do you make a distinction between American and other films?

A. For trade purposes.

Q. Supposing you impose a higher duty only on American films, making a distinction between foreign films, don't you think America will retaliate and make it difficult for you to get really good films?

A. I don't think so. England also is making good films now.

Q. England is imposing a quota in making a preferential treatment between one country and another except as regards the Empire. You cannot make a distinction between America and Germany? Do you mean that a higher duty should be imposed on all foreign films?

A. Yes, that is what I mean.

Q. The danger is, we heard in Bombay that one of the very best actresses there learnt her art merely by looking at American films?

A. It is enough if a higher duty were imposed on American films.

Q. Therefore, foreign films are useful in that way?

A. You can get experts from there.

Q. I think you can learn a lot by looking at the pictures, can't you?

A. I don't think so.

Q. Had you any difficulty in getting your films censored after you had produced them? What sort of difficulty did you meet with?

A. The censors rejected certain portions which they ought not to have done.

Q. Does it interfere with the story?

A. They objected to a police sergeant being shown there. I fought against it, and ultimately they allowed me to show the sergeant but not his wife.

Q. Do you complain that the censorship is too detailed so as to interfere with the technique and direction of the story?

A. Yes.

Q. Can you give us any concrete instances?

A. I showed a bedroom scene in which the husband and wife were sleeping together, and the censor did not allow this.

Mr. Green : Do you seriously suggest that they should allow it?

A. That was a bedroom scene and there was also a dacoit shown trying to enter the room, and the censors did not allow it.

Chairman : Those are matters of detail into which this Committee cannot enter. But I suppose you agree that there should be censorship?

A. Yes.

Q. And you think there should be an appeal to a central authority?

A. There must be one Board.

Q. Leaving the matter to the Local Governments will not be satisfactory?

A. No. There should be a central or appellate authority composed of officials and non-officials on these matters for censoring the films; where the trade complains that there has been too much censoring there should be an appellate body to which it can appeal.

Sir Haroon Jaffer : What should be the composition of the directorate of the British Empire Syndicate that you just mentioned? Would you have an Indian majority on it?

A. Yes.

Q. You mean the production should be done with the assistance of Indians?

A. Yes.

Q. You know that a British company intends coming to India and that it has agreed to accept a majority of Indian directors?

A. Yes.

Q. You say that the English Company has agreed to accept a majority of Indians as directors?

A. Yes.

Q. As regards Madans, why can you not capture them by buying all their shares yourself?

A. They don't sell their shares. The shares are not available in the market, and they are all controlled by Madans themselves. They are doing well, and they don't want to sell their shares.

Q. As regards the higher tariff which you suggest, don't you think American films will still come in inspite of a higher tariff and Indian audiences will suffer thereby?

A. In that case they will go in for our own productions.

Q. But you know that Indian productions are not enough, and inspite of the higher tariff American productions will still come in, and the Indian audience will thereby suffer?

A. If we could get better productions from the syndicate that I just mentioned, people would certainly like to see Indian pictures.

Q. That will take a very long time and until then the Indian audience will suffer?

A. Until then let them see American pictures, there is no harm.

Q. Do you think the actors and actresses that you get are coming from good families?

A. No. But outside Calcutta I found that we could get people from respectable families, and we got Major Bell's daughter in Hyderabad. We can get Anglo-Indians from respectable families.

Q. How can you draw actors and actresses from respectable families in Bengal?

A. We can get them here. Now, of course, they don't like to mix with the class of people that are taking part in the theatres, but if the concern is managed by really respectable people, I think we would be able to get actors and actresses from respectable families.



**Q.** Would you like Government to stop prostitutes from taking part in the theatres with a view to attract respectable people?

**A.** No, but unless respectable people run the concerns, even the present production will disappear.

**Q.** Are the films that you produced in Hyderabad shown in Bombay or Calcutta?

**A.** Madans exhibited them here. In Bombay the Majestic Cinema, the Imperial and the Globe exhibited them.

**Q.** Are they still produced in Hyderabad?

**A.** There is no producing company there now.

**Q.** As regards the percentage demanded by the exhibitors, you say they ask for 75 per cent. of the receipts?

**A.** Yes, and they get that percentage.

**Q.** So you cannot complain against Madans alone?

**A.** Why not?

**Q.** Because you yourself demand 75 per cent. from other exhibitors?

**A.** I am telling you the same thing. Madans are taking 75 per cent. from others, similarly I am also doing the same thing. I wanted that every one of them should show an Indian picture.

**Q.** Are these actors and actresses engaged on salaries or on piece work?

**A.** Now they are engaged on piece work.

**Q.** Is there any complaint that they give out any trade secrets?

**A.** Sometimes, because if we produce a social drama, they say that it is not so, and so on; but still the work goes on.

**Q.** There is an entertainment tax here?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Would you like that tax to be used for the promotion of the cinema industry?

**A.** Yes, and the duty on raw films and other materials should also be realised for the same purposes.

**Q.** How did you solve the difficulty in Hyderabad with regard to captions?

**A.** I gave only Hindi and English captions. But when I showed the films in Bombay, there was some difficulty and I had to put in Gujrati captions; similarly, in Bengal too I had to put in Bengali captions.

**Q.** How do you think you can solve this difficulty?

**A.** Unless there are more copies with titles in different languages, the films cannot be made popular in all parts of India. It is not a difficult process, and as it does not cost much, it can be made.

**Mr. Neogy:** With regard to the British concern with which you are in communication, may I know whether it is already engaged in producing pictures elsewhere?

**A.** Yes, they will start from January next, and they will have a branch here.

**Q.** Have you any idea of the amount of capital they are going to invest in the Indian branch of their concern?

**A.** No, but I know that each share will cost ten thousand pounds. Most of their shareholders are Lancashire cotton spinners.

**Q.** You said that there will be Indian directors on it. Will they be expected to subscribe to the share capital?

**A.** No, but they will be paid servants.

**Q.** And your position will also be that of a paid servant, and therefore whatever profit that concern might make will go to the Britishers?

**A.** Yes.

*Q.* And Indians will not be benefitted except as paid servants, though it may be a good opening for Indians, is it not?

*A.* Yes, that is all.

*Chairman :* Is that what you meant by a majority of Indian Directors?

*A.* Yes.

*Mr. Neogy :* Do you think that a concern in which the Indians will have absolutely no voice should be permitted to operate in India?

*A.* Some of the Rajas and Maharajas might be able to buy their shares.

*Q.* Do you think there is any great chance for many Indians to subscribe to its shares under these conditions?

*A.* I don't think so.

*Q.* Have you ascertained whether Indians are likely to take any shares?

*A.* I believe the Maharaja of Burdwan is thinking of buying some shares in it. But I have no idea about the capital of the company.

*Q.* What happened to the Indo-British studio that you were working for some years back?

*A.* We had to stop it owing to some differences of opinion among ourselves. We sold the cameras and other things of the studio to the Taj Mahal Company. That studio is not made use of by any one now.

*Q.* Now, I want your opinion about your own films. I gather that your stories were very good and popular, and the production was also very good on the whole?

*A.* I can't say very good, but they were good when compared with other Indian pictures.

*Q.* And they proved a financial success?

*A.* To a certain extent.

*Q.* Then, to what do you ascribe the failure of your concern?

*A.* It was not a failure, but we had to stop it, because some of the promoters could not agree among themselves.

*Q.* Suppose the Government were to come in with some aid. You cannot expect them to settle your quarrels?

*A.* If there is Government control and management, there cannot be any quarrel. But our quarrel and dissolution of partnership were alone responsible for the stoppage of our concern, otherwise it was paying.

*Q.* What I want to know is, if your own productions can stand on their own merits, why do you ask for direct Government aid?

*A.* Sufficient capital is not forthcoming.

*Q.* You said you had no difficulty in getting together a lakh of rupees. Was it not sufficient for your purpose?

*A.* No, we wanted more.

*Q.* You said there are not sufficient facilities for the exhibition of Indian pictures. When you said this I suppose you were thinking of Calcutta?

*A.* In Bombay also they do not care for Bengal pictures. They take their pictures from the local producers.

*Q.* So far as Calcutta is concerned, I suppose there is no such difficulty for exhibiting Bengal pictures?

*A.* No, but only we don't get favourable terms from certain parties.

*Q.* There are only a few theatres in Calcutta where it would be profitable to show Indian pictures, and it is not every theatre which would draw an Indian crowd, is that so?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* So with the exception of three or four Madan Theatres, you think it would be profitable to show the Indian pictures in the other theatres? You would exclude the Globe also?

*A.* Yes.

**Q.** The Crown, I take it, caters mostly for the middle class Bengali community?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Don't you think there is room for one or two more theatres in Sham Bazar quarter? Would they not be profitable?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Then what prevents a Bengali from starting one or two theatres on that side? Madans control only one theatre on that side. Why don't some Bengalis start one or two in that locality?

**A.** They are very shy to invest money.

**Q.** So you cannot blame Madans; they own only one theatre there?

**A.** Yes. In Bhowanipur there is one theatre called the Purna Theatre and we could get favourable terms from them.

**Q.** So you could solve your own difficulty by opening more theatres because there is still room for them?

**A.** So I said that a syndicate should be formed to start theatres in important towns.

**Q.** Your experience of film production has not been very happy. But experience in Bombay has not been so unhappy in this matter. So, why should Government interfere only for the benefit of Bengal?

**A.** Because here they don't make much profit.

**Q.** So far as we could see, they did not incur loss here?

**A.** If you want people here to show Indian pictures only, you must introduce a sort of compulsion that every theatre should show a certain percentage of Indian films.

**Q.** You produced certain comic films yourself. What is your experience as to their comparative success from a financial point of view? Were they as profitable as social dramas and mythological films?

**A.** Mythological films are most profitable, then come comedy films.

**Q.** We have seen very few comic films, and it was suggested that there might be a wide market if more Indian comic films were made. What prevents you from making more comic films? Are they less profitable than social films?

**A.** No, they are equally profitable.

*Colonel Crawford :* You were a producer in a small way?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Why did you stop your production?

**A.** Because I did not like to spend more money.

**Q.** Was there no profit?

**A.** There was profit.

*Chairman :* What did you do with the profit you made?

**A.** I first invested a small sum and produced some pictures and I got some profit. I invested that profit again in the same concern and tried to produce more pictures. But now I have stopped producing pictures.

**Q.** Not because it ended in a loss?

**A.** No.

*Colonel Crawford :* You complain of the big exhibitor. What is your complaint? That he does not take your pictures?

**A.** He gives too little hire to make it a paying proposition.

**Q.** Are there sufficient theatres outside the Madan circuit to offer you a market?

**A.** Yes, there are.

**Q.** You have really no complaint then? You can get a market?

**A.** We can, but we have not got a market in Bengal, except Madans. We must go through Madans.

**Q.** And he can offer what price he likes?

**A.** Yes. But if we want any of their pictures, we exhibitors in Bengal, from Madans, they will ask three times the price.

**Q.** Are you an exhibitor too?

**A.** I was. I had two cinemas.

**Q.** And what was your difficulty as exhibitor?

**A.** To get the pictures from Madans especially.

**Q.** That is you could not import your pictures from abroad?

**A.** Yes, from the Universal and other hiring agencies.

**Q.** You do get pictures from them?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Sufficient?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Then you were not dependent on Madans?

**A.** No, except for Indian pictures; every exhibitor likes to have Indian pictures, they are much more profitable. So Madans have got many Indian pictures, and their hire is double.

**Q.** I don't quite understand your difficulty. The hire is much more than that of other companies?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** But the profits are much larger?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** What sort of rates of hireage do you get from the Indian producer?

**A.** It depends on the station.

**Q.** Where were your cinemas?

**A.** Hyderabad, Deccan.

**Q.** You had 2 cinemas?

**A.** Yes. Generally we give Rs. 500, or Rs. 450 or Rs. 350 for one week for an Indian picture.

**Q.** Do you call that very high?

**A.** No. This is the hire from the Kohinoor and other companies. But Madans won't give their pictures for any thing under Rs. 800 or Rs. 900.

**Q.** And what sort of profit would you make on that?

**A.** No profit.

**Q.** So you didn't hire. You made a profit on the other. You can get a plentiful supply of these?

**A.** Not much—not good quality.

**Q.** But they drew crowds all the same?

**A.** Oh yes.

**Q.** Have you closed those 2 cinemas?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Why?

**A.** Because I left Hyderabad.

**Q.** Simply because you left Hyderabad? They were a paying proposition before you left?

**A.** I left because my brother, who was engineer there, left also.

*Chairman :* He was dependent on his brother.

*Colonel Crawford :* You were not dependent on your cinemas?

**A.** No, because in Hyderabad it is very difficult for outsiders to do business there.

**Q.** Well, you have no complaint against this monopoly. It does not put any difficulties in your way? Is there a monopoly at present in the trade on the exhibition side?

A. On the exhibition side I find only monopoly in Bengal.

Q. Is that a handicap to you in any way?

A. Certainly.

Q. You mentioned the question of the rate of duty; you propose we should put up the tariff duty on western films coming into this country. What sort of rule would you have to give assistance to the Indian producing industry?

A. Raw films and other materials should be duty free.

Q. That is for you producers, yes. But on the imported films, how are the customs authorities going to value it? Who is going to say what is the value of any particular film?

A. I think they do it at present on the foot value.

Q. Yes, but the price you pay is on what the film contains. For the photograph that is in the film, for the story that is on the film. How are you going to put a duty on that? Have you any idea how it could be done practically?

A. No. The duty should be there.

Mr. Green: In connection with the last question, is the new duty you want on the cinema film a specific duty?—say, one anna a foot?

A. Yes, on foreign films.

Q. And you would have the same rate of duty whether it was a cheap film or whether it was a million dollar production?

A. Yes, all must be at the same rate.

Q. I was also very interested in what you said about your comic films. They apparently were your greatest successes?

A. Yes.

Q. I understood you to say that one, after being shown for 3 months in Calcutta, was sold to Bombay for more than it had cost to produce?

A. Yes, to K. D. Bros., a film company in Bombay. They are importers.

Q. Couldn't you get any capital after showing these results? Couldn't you get any capital for forming a decent organised company?

A. No.

Q. Have you any business experience, I mean in company law and procedure, and so on?

A. Yes, I was in the Indo-British Company.

Q. No, I don't mean that. Have you any knowledge of company promoting?

A. Yes.

Q. All I want to get at is, are you what is known as a business man? I take it rather that you are a technical expert in the camera line?

A. Yes. I am not much of a business man.

Q. I was interested in what you said about a cinema syndicate. In particular, the suggestion that that syndicate should build theatres in this country. I think the committee is satisfied from evidence that the cinema habit in India is certainly growing. At the same time the number of theatres does not seem to be growing very rapidly. Do you think that, if safe but cheap theatres were erected in some of the smaller towns in this province or any other part of India you know of, with an assured supply of films at reasonable rates, they could be made to pay?

A. Yes.

Q. At present it appears that a town has got to have at least 50,000 inhabitants, if not more, to run a cinema?

A. Yes, it will be a profitable thing.

Q. And you think that under the present circumstances of the trade, owing to certain restrictions that you point out, it is impossible for such theatres to come into being unless a powerful syndicate does it?

A. Yes.

Q. What I am getting at is this. You want some body with plenty of capital to come along to build theatres because you consider that before you have theatres you cannot make films. Is that the point that you wish to make?

A. Yes.

Q. I think that was your point, but I wanted to bring it out.

Chairman : Would there not be another monopoly then?

Mr. Green : In other words, you want to save one threatened 'monopoly' by creating another body powerful enough to fight it?

A. No, no. That syndicate's films will be available for everyone. We don't want it for our syndicate.

Q. But this is a business concern you are contemplating?

A. Yes.

Q. Now, I know you have hinted that it should have Government assistance of a sort.

A. Yes.

Q. You probably know that some of the members of the committee are toying with the idea of a Government run studio in order to produce educational films, public utility films, which at present are not a commercial proposition?

A. If the syndicate produce like that and build cinema houses, the same body can produce the pictures for public utility and educational purposes.

Q. Is it part of your idea that this syndicate should also produce films for Government?

A. Yes, certainly.

Q. You contemplate that for that reason Government should give them a subsidy or should pay for work done?

A. Pay for work done.

Q. But they would have to make some provision presumably for a sufficiently high standard of technique and production?

A. Yes.

Q. That would be an essential part of your scheme?

A. Yes.

Q. I was wondering whether that was what was at the back of your mind when you talked of Government assistance?

A. That picture would be like Pathe's Gazette shown in all houses.

Q. You mean that it should be compulsory?

A. Yes.

Q. That every cinema should be forced to display out of so many hours half an hour of approved educational films?

A. Yes, just like they show Pathe's Gazette just now.

Chairman : But Pathe's Gazette is not compulsory?

A. But I want it compelled.

Mr. Green : You want it put on a quarter of an hour before as part of the programme?

A. Yes.

Q. Now do you think—don't answer this question if you don't want to, if it should affect your business interests—do you think there is a reasonable chance of a syndicate of this size really coming into operation in India?

A. Yes, certainly.

Chairman : I don't think he has understood. Such a company as you have in mind, is it likely to come in the near future?

A. No, no.

*Mr. Green :* I only wanted to find out how much this is your idea, and how far it is practicable?

*A.* No chance of companies.

*Q.* I rather gathered from you that you hoped they might be coming shortly?

*A.* No.

*Q.* But you are in touch with some such organisation?

*A.* This is the British Films Limited in England.

*Chairman :* Are they likely to come?

*A.* They want to produce English pictures the first time.

*Q.* Where?

*A.* In their own country and then they want to come here also.

*Mr. Green :* Then your ideas have not advanced very far?

*A.* Simply they will start from January in England.

*Mr. Coatsman :* I missed the opening questions so it is possible I may try to retrace them. How many pictures do you produce in the year?

*Chairman :* He is not producing.

*Mr. Coatsman :* How long were you in the business?

*A.* About 5 years.

*Q.* And what was your average output during those years?

*A.* 14 altogether.

*Q.* Oh, I see, in a very small way. Well, now your desire for Government help, what form exactly do you think that help ought to take? You were very strong on the need for Government helping the producer. Exactly what form ought that help to take?

*A.* To make the exhibition of pictures compulsory.

*Q.* Did you think Government ought to give any financial help?

*A.* I don't think so.

*Chairman :* He wants quota and facilities and import duty.

*Mr. Coatsman :* Well, all my questions were based on the assumption that he was still producing. Thank you.

**Oral Evidence of Rai JADUNATH MAZUMDAR Bahadur, M.A.,  
B.L., C.I.E., M.L.C., Advocate, on Thursday, the 15th December 1927.**

*Chairman :* I suppose you have considerable experience of Bengal in various capacities?

*A.* I know Bengal a little. I know the whole of India a little also.

*Q.* You reside both in Jessore and in Calcutta?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Have you got a cinema in Jessore at all?

*A.* No. Sometimes travelling cinemas come there from Calcutta.

*Q.* Do they come very often?

*A.* Almost every year.

*Q.* How often in the year?

*A.* During the winter generally.

*Q.* Do several companies come there?

*A.* Some companies come there from Calcutta.

*Q.* Do you get 2 or 3 companies coming there?

*A.* Sometimes 2, sometimes 3.

**Q.** What sort of films do they show in Jessore?

**A.** Mostly foreign films, the things which I have seen.

**Q.** You see films now and then in Calcutta?

**A.** Yes. Also I saw in Simla when I was there. I was taken by Sir Frederick Whyte to see the boxing match between Dempsey and Carpentier. I was very much pleased with it. There was a huge crowd there and I thought I was seeing America there. I could not expect such a gathering anywhere in India. I have been all over India and I do not think we could get such a crowd anywhere here.

**Q.** There was seating accommodation for over 150,000 people?

**A.** Yes, and it was a lesson to me even in my old age.

**Q.** You think that the cinema has got a powerful influence as an educational factor?

**A.** Very powerful. If India wishes to be in touch with the whole world I think the cinema is necessary as a medium of education.

**Q.** Especially having regard to the illiteracy that prevails, you think the cinema may be more effective for conveying information to the people?

**A.** Certainly. I consider it is a great educator.

**Q.** Do you consider as a gentleman who bestows thought on public affairs—would you put it down as the duty of the Government to do something directly or indirectly to aid that industry?

**A.** I think if I had any hand in the Government I should have helped the cinema.

**Q.** Do you think then that the Government as regards at least the spreading of knowledge, such as, in hygiene, sanitation, health, industry, agriculture, . . .

**A.** Yes, they would educate the people very efficiently if they adopt the cinema as a medium of education in the rural tracts especially.

**Q.** Would you put it down as part of the duty of the Government, of equal importance with primary education, or even of greater importance than primary education?

**A.** I would attach even greater importance to the cinema. In my own case I have read of America in books, but one scene in the cinema conveys a much greater idea of America than all the books that I have read.

**Mr. Green :** Would it convey an equally effective idea to the illiterate or the hardly literate people?

**A.** It all depends upon the intellectual standard of the people. At the same time, when they see these gatherings, they have an idea of the huge gatherings there. They see it is possible to have such gatherings. I remember vividly the training which those two champions were having from the beginning for the match, and other similar things. I think all this will convey the same idea to the illiterate man.

**Q.** How they behave in a crowd?

**A.** Yes, how silent and calm everything was. In India when people play football matches, there is a lot of noise, but in other countries I know that it is very quiet.

**Q.** They don't sit quiet; they do cheer.

**A.** Yes. But they do not make the same noise as the crowds do here. I therefore think it is a great educator even to the illiterate man. He will appreciate it and he will have a knowledge of other countries.

**Chairman :** There is some doubt whether the illiterate people will be able to follow a moving picture?

**A.** They do follow. The people here are not slow of intellect. If you mix with the masses you will find that they possess sufficient intelligence to appreciate these things. I have seen lots of people, that is, of the lower classes, going to the cinema, illiterate cultivators and peasants, and I have asked them how they enjoyed these things. They say they enjoy them immensely, and I could see they do understand the pictures.



**Q.** So you think that Government should utilise the cinema?

**A.** As much as the Government can afford for the purpose of educating.

**Q.** Have you seen Indian pictures?

**A.** Perhaps one or two.

**Q.** You have not seen many?

**A.** No. But I understand that mythological scenes and things like that are very good. I would rather have foreign things, also because these mythological things they see for themselves with their own eyes here. We see our own marriage ceremonies here, our own various other customs here, with our own eyes. But we do not know much about Australia, Canada, South Africa, America and so on, and people should be made to be put in a position to know them. Indians should not be allowed to remain an isolated people, but they should be in touch with conditions in the rest of the world. It is coming to that. We are going to be a member of the great British Commonwealth and we must be in touch with the whole world. That is my ideal.

**Q.** Of course we have got evidence to show that the Indian films are getting more and more popular with the people.

**A.** I have no objection to that. Let us have as many Indian films as possible. But I would rather have foreign films also. For instance, the Bengal peasant does not migrate to other places. You have lots of Madras people here, but in Madras you won't find a single Bengali. Therefore the Bengali peasant does not know the conditions of life in Madras. Our illiterate men do not migrate from this province.

**Mr. Green :** I get Bengali B.A.'s coming over for jobs to Bombay.

**A.** As clerks, not as cultivators. You find lots of Madras peasants here, Punjabi peasants here, Nepali peasants and so on, but you cannot find a single Bengali peasant in other places. The illiterate peasants in Bengal do not know anything about the conditions of life outside Bengal.

**Sir Haroon Jaffer :** You are speaking of educational films?

**A.** Yes, and entertainment also. A man does not wish simply to learn but also to enjoy life. Life should not be dry and dull, it should be made attractive.

**Q.** You do not like Indian entertainment films?

**A.** I like Indian entertainment films, but I wish to combine knowledge of foreign people and their customs in the broad sense of the term. I want to spread light.

**Chairman :** Do you think the travelling cinemas may be made use of for that purpose even though you have no permanent picture houses?

**A.** Yes. You can have travelling cinemas all over the country to educate people.

**Q.** Are you getting sufficient travelling cinemas now to go about in the country?

**A.** No. Their number is very few, not adequate to meet the educational requirements of the country.

**Q.** I do not know if you have considered the question of what the Government should do in that direction.

**A.** I have considered it. I think the Government might give help. Whenever they find a cinema company being started the Government might start by giving some bounty or some help, just as they help educational institutions.

**Q.** Make educational grants you mean?

**A.** Yes. This may be done from year to year and the Government may take some guarantee from them that they will do such and such a thing and so on. They might be put under the Inspector of Schools or the Director of Public Instruction.

**Q.** You think it might be made part of the educational programme?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** It should also combine with it amusement?

**A.** Yes. Otherwise it won't attract people unless you have got some amusement combined with it. Just as children are attracted to kindergarten by some amusement, so you must attract the people by some amusement.

**Q.** Do you think the people are sufficiently enterprising to put up cinema theatres wherever they may be needed?

**A.** I think the Government might make a start and when people find it is paying, they will come in for it. I think so far as that is concerned, Bombay is better. The Bengali capital is very shy and perhaps Bengal is poorer than Bombay. So far as money is concerned, Bombay is much better than Bengal.

*Mr. Coatsman :* We were told it is also shy in Bombay.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer :* Bengal is very greedy of money?

**A.** I do not think I have seen any people in the world who have no greed for money, it is only a matter of degree.

**Q.** You have got a lot of money in Bengal, I see it.

**A.** I know something of economics and I can say that Bombay is hundred times richer than Bengal. When the English first came to this country, Bengal was the richest province in India.

*Chairman :* That requires to be proved as Mr. Coatsman will say.

**A.** When Clive entered Murshidabad after the battle of Plassey he said, "I find Murshidabad as populous as London and ten times as rich". Those were the words of Clive.

*Mr. Coatsman :* You mean London was not so rich? You mean Murshidabad was bigger than London?

**A.** You do not know. Murshidabad extended from Berhampore to Murshidabad, and the whole place was full of buildings. Now they have been demolished. Have you ever been to Berhampore? I may again quote the words of Clive, "I find Murshidabad as populous as London and ten times as rich".

*Sir Haroon Jaffer :* How many years ago was this?

**A.** 1757.

**Q.** A number of years ago!

**A.** Quite so. Within these years we have gone down and you have gone up.

*Chairman :* We are wandering away from the scope of our Committee.

**A.** It is all due to my friend there. (Sir Haroon Jaffer).

**Q.** There is one other thing on which I wish to have your valuable opinion. What do you think is the effect of the cinema on the people? Do you think it has any pernicious effect on the people?

**A.** I have lived long enough to see both sides of life. I meet with lots of people of different classes. I may say it all depends upon the family training and association. If people look upon other people's property as mere useless chattel, if people look upon other people's wives as their mothers—that is the training we get at home and people who have got such training won't be corrupted. No doubt there are people who might have falls. But I may say that everywhere there are temptations all round even without cinema shows. Therefore there is nothing extraordinary in the cinema to corrupt the morals of the people.

**Q.** You do not think there need be any apprehension on that score?

**A.** No. There is nothing exceptional in the cinemas. If they have any obscene scenes or pictures, you might censor them. But I think the cinema is a very good educator.

**Q.** You do not think it has any bad effect which need be taken notice of?

**A.** No. It is negligible considering the useful work that it is likely to do.

*Mr. Green :* I am afraid I am not very well versed in the geography of this part of India. What is the population approximately of Jessore?

A. Nearly 18 lakhs.

Q. I mean the town.

A. About 14,000, it is a small town.

Q. I asked you that question because so far we have not found any town boasting of a permanent cinema unless it has at least half a lakh of population. But you told us about travelling cinemas coming to your place?

A. It is only 70 miles from here and so all sorts of circuses, cinemas and other things come there.

Q. Is there any permanent theatre there?

A. Yes.

Q. And that is available for cinema shows?

A. Yes.

Q. When these travelling cinemas come?

A. Yes. There is a permanent theatre house at a cost of nearly Rs. 20,000.

*Chairman :* What for was that put up?

A. For the purpose of theatrical plays only.

Q. Who put it up?

A. It was a private thing, but now it has been made public.

*Mr. Green :* When these travelling cinemas come, all kinds of people go to see the cinema?

A. All sorts of people, from the lowest to the highest.

Q. Illiterate and the literate?

A. Yes. The illiterate generally go to the lowest class.

Q. What have they to pay?

A. 4 annas, 8 annas. Whenever they find that people are not coming they lessen the price.

Q. 2 annas?

A. Not two annas. 4 annas is the least I have seen.

Q. But people there will go and pay 4 annas. Are they labourers, cultivators?

A. Yes.

Q. Are they illiterate in Bengali?

A. Yes, altogether illiterate.

Q. And yet you find they can follow western films reasonably well?

A. Human nature is the same all over the world.

Q. I agree with you, as long as they are well constructed films anybody can follow them. But the view has been put before us that illiterate people cannot appreciate a moving picture.

A. It may be that some of the things may not be appreciated. For instance, in the Dempsey-Carpentier fight they may not understand the technical peculiarities of boxing, but they know that there is a fight going on. They understand that all the same. They understand here is the man who wins, and as soon as the man falls, the victor goes and embraces the vanquished, showing the great generosity of the victor. That tells them that the victor and the vanquished are friends as soon as they are off the stage. That is a lesson.

*Mr. Coatsman :* I was very interested to hear what you said about foreign pictures and British Commonwealth pictures. You are obviously strongly impressed by the power of the cinema for conveying instruction and information about foreign countries?

A. Instruction, information and entertainment. Pure instruction never attracts children. It is only an old man like me that likes hard philosophy, but not so young men.

**Q.** But you can have pictures which are both entertaining and instructive?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** You do agree that by means of the cinema the social conditions of the people of one country can be made known to another?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** You would like your own history, of course, to be made known to the rest of the world?

**A.** Yes, so that we may correct any defects that we may have in the eyes of the other parts of the world, and if there is something wrong in them no longer an isolated people. We are tending towards a federation of stages in the eyes of the Indian they again may correct themselves. Now we are and therefore we must know each other in a friendly way, not in the way of Miss Mayo's book, but rather in a friendly way.

**Q.** Would you like pictures of India prepared by Indians to circulate throughout the rest of the British Commonwealth?

**A.** I would.

**Q.** If you had to choose, would you rather have them circulated freely in the British Commonwealth—rather than in other foreign countries?

**A.** I would circulate them all over the world. I regard it as a necessary thing to circulate them in other parts of the British Commonwealth more than in any other part of the world. At the same time I would like them to circulate throughout the rest of the world.

**Q.** And naturally you would prefer real Indian life to be shown?

**A.** Yes, the peasant's life, the middle man's life, the big man's life.

**Q.** In the great process of India's progress to dominion status and her proper incorporation in the British Empire, do you think the film could help if properly employed?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** And would you like it to be so employed?

**A.** Yes, to the attainment of that ideal of all British statesmen and of all sober Indian statesmen that we must have a commonwealth of different nations under the British flag.

**Q.** Have you ever considered how such an exchange of films might be made between the different parts of the Commonwealth? What conclusions have your thoughts led you to? Can you make any specific suggestion?

**A.** There are some mercantile agencies and they might be helped by Government in the beginning. For instance, there are companies in England. Indian pictures may be circulated through them, and they have also companies here in India. The English peasant life, the English labourer's life, the English political life, English marriages, English parties, English sanitation, English melas and fairs and so on may be shown here.

**Q.** I except you have been reading from time to time of what is called the Quota Bill, or Cinematograph Bill which has just been passed into law by Parliament. It lays down that the theatres in the United Kingdom must show a definite percentage of Empire-produced films at each performance. You have read that?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Do you realise that those words "Empire-produced films" include films produced here in India by Indians?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Do you regard the passage of that Bill as good?

**A.** I have not read the details of the Bill.

**Q.** Under that Bill the exhibitors in England would be looking all round for films produced within the Empire to make up their quota. Do you re-

gard this circumstance as now providing an opportunity for Indian producers?

A. I think it is a very good opportunity.

Q. And you think it would be a good thing if they now tried to get into touch with exhibitors in England?

A. I think so. We shall be more in touch with each other.

Mr. Neogy: Let me take up the point which was just touched upon by Mr. Coatman.—You are very anxious that India should be known not only to other parts of the Empire but also to other parts of the world?

A. Yes.

Q. In so far as the film can assist in bringing about a better understanding between India and the other parts of the world and the different parts of the Empire, it is essential that the people living in those other parts of the world should see our films—how are you going to force people to see Indian films if they do not choose to see them?

A. Nobody can force.

Q. You have said that you are very anxious to see western films because it provides a means of education for ourselves—we are very anxious to know the outside world through the medium of the film. Are you aware of any corresponding anxiety on the part of the rest of the British Empire to understand India?

A. I have come into contact with a lot of Englishmen during the last 50 years, graduates, merchants, high officers, ranging from governors and governor-generals to assistants and merchants and all that. And I find that all of them are unanimous in saying that the people of England would be glad to know more of India as there is much ignorance about India in England. One Oxford graduate who used to occupy a high place here told me that people in England did not know anything about India, but now they have a better opinion of India than they had when he was a youth. He entered as a civilian and retired as a high official. So I say, just as the labourers here are anxious to know what the English labourers are doing, there must be a corresponding desire in the minds of the English labourer to know what the Indian labourer does. There is a labour federation in the making all over the world now, and I think the labourers in other countries would like to know about conditions here.

Mr. Coatman: May I add a footnote to that? In the last elections at home I helped a friend who stood for a constituency in Northampton which is an entirely agricultural constituency, and at every village where I made a speech, after I had finished, somebody or other asked me to tell them something about India. That happened at every village that I visited.

Mr. Neogy: There are certain theatres in Calcutta which are patronised, if not exclusively, very largely, by the Europeans and Anglo-Indians and the people who own these theatres say that they cannot exhibit Indian films there.

A. If Indian pictures were shown in any theatres here to Europeans there will be no audience.

Mr. Neogy: Now, how does that encourage you in thinking that these pictures will have a better reception in England?

A. But the Englishman in India is quite a different person from the Englishman at home. Kindly excuse me those English gentlemen who are here. Englishmen when they come to India consider us untouchables, but that feeling I have heard from lots of friends does not prevail in England. Here some Anglo-Indians, not the genuine Europeans but the counterfeit coin, consider the Indian as something like untouchable. But I think at the same time there are people here among Anglo-Indians and Europeans who would appreciate a good Indian picture. Of course if it is purely Indian they may not appreciate it. I know of many cultured Englishmen here in whose houses they have only Indian furniture. And I know Lord Carson once told me that the European sometimes patronised more of

Indian arts and manufactures than Indian themselves. He was sorry that when he went to many Indian States he found European furniture and he exhorted them to use Indian furniture. There are many Europeans in India who patronise Indian arts and furniture and even clothes. I have seen some of them wearing purely Indian clothes in preference to European clothes. So it is better to be charitable. I say let us be as charitable as possible to their ideas. I do not think that I should hate other people.

*Q.* You are quite right. So far as the cinema is concerned we have been seeing more of Western life than Western people have been seeing of Indian life. So we have done more than our part in this business. It is now for them to show that they are anxious to understand us through the cinema.

*A.* Quite so; they ought to make a response.

*Mr. Green :* They have made a response already in the Quota Bill!

*Mr. Neogy :* Referring to the Quota Bill, the British Bill which has just been passed in England, that makes it compulsory for each and every British cinema to show a certain percentage of British Empire films. Now British Empire films would, of course, include Indian films. You would wait and see if as a matter of fact Indian films are patronised by the British picture-house owners before you come to any conclusion in the matter?

*A.* What conclusion.

*Q.* That they are anxious to see our pictures; this quota system gives them an opportunity of seeing our pictures.

*A.* I do not wish to dogmatise myself that Englishmen will flock to see these pictures. I say it generally as a human probability.

*Q.* Under existing circumstances we see more of American pictures than British pictures, but we do see a good deal of British pictures too. Britain does not see Indian pictures even to the extent of a hundredth part of the British pictures that we see here.

*A.* In short, I will just tell you this is a matter in which the British Government should come to our help.

*Chairman :* There must be a reciprocal agreement between the two Governments.

*A.* The British Government at home must also help us.

*Mr. Neogy :* We must lay down a condition that in so far as we take your British pictures you must take our pictures there and in so far as we have been seeing British pictures for the last so many years . . .

*Col. Crawford :* British pictures?

*Mr. Neogy :* Of course, so much of British pictures; and in so far as we have seen so much footage of British pictures up to date, it is now for the Britisher to see that much of footage of Indian pictures there.

*A.* Quite so. I think there should be a corresponding response from the British Exchequer.

*Q.* Quite, I agree with you there. We may have seen millions of footage of British pictures in India, but they have not seen even a few thousands of footage of Indian films.

*Mr. Green :* You are assuming that there has been an extraordinary amount of British footage.

*Mr. Neogy :* Undoubtedly, millions ever since the cinema came into being. At the present moment Great Britain supplies a very small proportion of the pictures here in India, America having practically monopolised the field. But we have seen a large quantity of British pictures in India all these years, while Great Britain has not been seeing even a small fraction thereof in Indian pictures?

*A.* Can you give me the names of the British films?

*Mr. Neogy :* The names are all there if you look up the list for the last so many years.

*Chairman :* Supposing we are now taking 20,000 feet of British films would you insist that Britain should take that 20,000 feet in Indian films?

*Mr. Neogy* : Otherwise you will stop taking the British films?

A. I will not go so far as that. It does not matter whether one takes 1,000 feet more or less. We should see the general desire of the people. We should see whether Britain is responding.

*Mr. Neogy* : That is to be the acid test of their interest in India? And you might wait and see their interest in Indian pictures before you committed yourself?

A. My idea is if you can make the pictures, well and good. I think they will be taken, although I may be mistaken.

*Col. Crawford* : If they are of the right quality, they will take them.

*Mr. Coatsman* : There is no question about that.

*Mr. Neogy* : But Britons there say they don't care for your pictures.

A. Because they don't know the Indian people, but when you come to know some one as a friend, you may like to see him.

Q. That is to say, you must make yourself known before your pictures can appeal to them. In other words, you must undertake some kind of propaganda there before your pictures can possibly have a market.

A. Quite so. And for that purpose the British Exchequer should come to our help.

*Chairman* : How do you say the British Exchequer.

A. Why not? In so far as British films are concerned it is the lookout of the British Government.

Q. There is no question of Government doing anything; it is the trade.

A. But I say it is a higher idea than trade. I call it an Empire idea, an Empire ideal to make different parts of the Empire known to each other.

Q. I want your definite suggestion as to how the British Exchequer is to help in that matter.

A. Yes. The British Exchequer can make a grant to India every year for the purpose of producing films and we can have our own propaganda.

*Mr. Neogy* : So, you are thinking more of Government propaganda to be carried on through the agency of the film in which the different Governments of the Empire will co-operate. You are not going to impose any restriction on the trade for the purpose of this propaganda?

*Chairman* : You want the Government to carry on and not exercise any compulsion on the trade?

A. Yes.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer* : There are about 90 per cent. of films coming from America.

A. I take it from you.

Q. Would you like this economic wealth of India exported to America in this way? Won't you do anything for the film industry here?

A. Why not? I shall do everything that I can to produce Indian films and send them to America.

Q. Would you like to see 90 per cent. of Indian films always here?

A. I won't object to that because it is an educator of the people but if you can produce American films yourself, because Indians can produce American films themselves, my object is to let the people educate the people in the world conditions prevailing at present and therefore I want not only American films but Australian films, Mexican films.

*Mr. Neogy* : Chinese films?

A. Japanese films, Korean, Angoran films.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer* : But they are not coming here.

A. Send your men. Let the Government come in because it is an educational matter and therefore I won't object to any number of films coming.

from outside. But at the same time I would ask my Government and my people also to have some enterprise. If you go on sleeping nobody will help you. The sleepy fox catches no poultry.

*Chairman* : You mean the Government should not go to sleep in this matter.

A. Neither Government nor the people.

*Col. Crawford* : There is one point you very nearly answered in the course of that. Would you be opposed to allowing any one country to get a monopoly of films showing in India? I am talking of whatever imported films you would be up against. If you can find some means, you would prevent any one country from getting a monopoly?

A. But at the same time I would give a slight preference to the films of the British Commonwealth as much as possible.

Q. A slight preference over the rest of the world?

A. Yes, a slight advantage. For instance, I would like to have the British Commonwealth united as a nation and therefore I would rather prefer to have films of the British Commonwealth than of other countries, but at the same time I would not put a bar upon other foreign films.

*Chairman* : Take the case of tariff; you would impose a lesser tariff or import duty on British films than on other foreign films?

A. I would, provided they do the same in regard to ours.

### Written Statement of the Aurora Cinema Company, Calcutta.

1. We are Cinematograph Exhibitors and Producers and Renters of Indian Subject films.

2. (a)—(b) Formerly the audience from the educated classes consisted mainly of students. But now the shows are patronised equally by all classes of people, young and old, educated and illiterate, male and female. In towns, the educated classes predominate, but in villages the audience is chiefly drawn from the uneducated classes. The attendance, on the whole, is on the increase and that to a large extent. (The answer refers to the whole of Bengal and Assam).

(c) Except in special performances for children, the number of Indian children visiting Cinemas is small. At ordinary shows, children rarely attend, unless they are taken there by some adult members of their family.

3. The educated classes prefer romantic, emotional and sensational dramas while the religious dramas and serials are more popular with the uneducated. The ladies generally like religious and social subjects.

4. No, the Exhibitors are not catering adequately for Indian audiences at present. The supply is hardly sufficient to meet the increasing demand. The reasons are:—

(1) High import duties on cinema films.

(2) Insufficient production of indigenous films on account of high cost.

(3) Smallness of profit.

5. (a)—(b) There are only a few Indian produced films depicting Indian life and they are not of first class quality. Still such films are popular.

(c) Yes, it is more profitable to show an Indian than a Western film. All the films produced by our Company fetched more income than the imported films exhibited by us.

6. (a) Yes.

(b) See the answer to the question 3.

7. We have no experience.

8. (a) No, we are not satisfied.



(b) The main difficulties are:—

1. Insufficient capital,
  2. Unenterprising habit of the people,
- some propaganda is necessary to draw capital into this Industry.

9. No. There is a monopoly.

10. Yes, there is such a system in this Province.

11. (a) Yes, for Indian-produced films.

(b) No.

12. Yes.

13. The Import Duty is too high.

In our opinion, the import duty on 2nd-hand films should not be more than 10 per cent. on the Invoice cost, while the virgin films should be duty-free.

14. Yes, there is a keen demand for such films.

15. Yes. All conditions are favourable except supply of sufficient capital. India is an epitome of the world. All sorts of natural scenic beauties, human races and cultures are found in this country. The Indians, specially Bengalis, possess naturally an artistic temperament. So, if sufficient capital be forthcoming, there is a great future for this Industry here.

16. Yes, the talent is there in sufficient quantity and this can be easily developed and multiplied to any extent with the growth of the Industry.

17. See the last part of the answer to question 8.

18. Yes. The Government may order educational, sanitary, industrial, agricultural films in large quantities and may also provide facilities for cheaper and better production of films by reducing duties on materials, by establishing training classes and by sending men abroad to get special training in film-production.

19. Excepting the cost of films and chemicals, all other costs are less in India than in any other country.

20. See the answer to the question No. 18.

21. No objection to such an Agency provided that it has a popular basis and private enterprises are not unduly interfered with. A monopoly has always a tendency to be abused.

22. Such a measure, we are afraid, will affect the industry adversely in this country by restricting the market for us. At present India is only an importer and not an exporter of films.

23. Such pictures may be used to a large extent. They will provide useful information to the people.

24. We are afraid there are some criminally suggestive films which may have a demoralising effect specially on young and tender minds (*e.g.*, such scenes as successful burglaries, elopements, devilry). It is difficult, for obvious reasons, to give any specific instance of demoralising effects of immoral or criminally suggestive films, but it is a general belief that such crimes as motor dacoities, etc., in this country were first suggested by some of these pictures. Persons of certain temperaments try to emulate the things they have seen.

25. We do not think that the difference is such as to necessitate any special measure.

26. We have no knowledge of any such films. If there be any such scenes more care should be taken in censoring them.

27. No, we do not think so.

28. See answer to question 24.

29. Yes.

30. No. (Excepting those certified specially for adults only).

31. Yes.

32. On the whole it is satisfactory, but we should like to see on the Board of Censors a larger proportion of non-officials, educationists, artists and representative of the film industry.

33. Too strict a censorship is not desirable in the present state of the film industry in this country.

34. No.

35. (a) Yes.

(b) Yes.

36. The Inspector should possess artistic and educational qualifications and also some knowledge of the film industry.

37. Yes.

38. No.

39. No.

40. No.

41. We should think so.

42. See answer to question 32.

43. No.

44. To a large extent, by a healthy and impartial criticism.

45. No, there is no necessity at present.

### **Oral Evidence of Professor M. M. BOSE, M.A., and others of the Aurora Cinema Co., Calcutta, on Thursday, the 15th December 1927.**

*Chairman :* You are the Managing Director of the Aurora Producing Company?

A. I am not the Managing Director, I am a Director.

Q. One of the Directors?

A. And I am interested in the business as well as in the writing of scenario and all that. I am in the Educational Service.

Q. You are now a Professor?

A. Of the Scottish Churches College. I have been teaching there for about 38 years.

Q. Professor of English?

A. Yes, of English partly. Formerly I used to teach Economists and History, but now I teach English and Bengalee.

Q. You are still a Professor?

A. Yes. But I have been interesting myself in the stage and the drama for nearly 40 years, not only the Cinema but the regular theatre and my idea is to improve and develop the stage because I consider the stage as a great educator. Even to-day I am going to lecture on that subject at the Y. M. C. A.—on the Stage as a medium of education.

Q. You believe in the cinema as a very vital means of education?

A. Certainly I do.

Q. Even in Schools and Colleges?

A. So far as academic education goes it is all right, but we have always depended on the stage for the education of the people. In India we have never had compulsory primary education but still people, though illiterate here, were not ignorant because we spread education through *Yatras*, *Kathakas* and such things. That is why you find that even the most illiterate people in this country are not ignorant, but will talk of high things and philosophy.

Q. You need not dilate on that.

A. That is why I regard the stage as the best educator.

Q. And the film is a powerful agent for propaganda?

A. Certainly for propaganda, as well as education.

Q. You think then it is the duty of Government to spend money in that direction?

A. In fact we have produced some of these films at the instance of the Government, *e.g.*, one Maternity film was produced by us at the direction of the Public Health Department. It has been a great success. We have been exhibiting that film, and only the other day we got an order from Berhampur in the District of Murshidabad; we have to give there 50 shows in different parts of the district. Of course we charge only a nominal fee because we want to make the thing popular.

Q. You say you have produced films?

A. Yes we have produced films for ourselves as well as for the Education Department, the Health Department and the Agricultural Department of the Government.

Q. May I know how much footage you have produced altogether already.

A. Here is a list.

Q. How long has this company been in existence?

A. Since 1913.

Q. You have been producing films from 1913?

A. We are exhibiting before but now we are producing.

Q. Are you also exhibiting?

A. Yes.

Q. Where do you exhibit?

A. We exhibit in different places. In Bengal and Assam.

Q. Travelling cinemas?

A. Not only travelling, but we also give shows in Calcutta.

Q. Have you got a theatre here?

A. We have not got a theatre.

Q. But when you say you are exhibiting what do you mean?

A. We simply hire pavilions and exhibit?

Q. You understand the difference between producer and exhibitor?

A. Certainly I do.

Q. You do business as an exhibitor, that is to say, you exhibit not only your own pictures but, . . . . .

A. But also import pictures.

Q. But you have no theatre of your own

A. No theatre of our own.

Q. You are then a distributor?

A. No, we also show pictures.

Q. Then you do business without a theatre.

A. We can hire theatres sometimes. (By second Witness Mr. A. N. Bose—Managing Proprietor of the Company). Ours is mainly a Travelling cinema.

Q. I want to know whether you are in the exhibition line as a travelling cinema.

A. Not only a travelling cinema, but sometimes we get a pavillion on hire.

Q. Which pavillion, can't you tell me?

A. The Star Theatre, The Russa Theatre.

Q. I do not understand. The Star Theatre is given to drama.

A. We just give our shows there sometimes.

Q. What do you mean by giving your shows?

A. For instance, there is our religious film "Krishna Sakha" which we exhibited there.

Q. So you carry on business both as exhibitor and producer?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you distribute to other exhibitors also? Not your own films, those you hire out. But do you import films and distribute them to other people?

A. No.

Q. Only what you produce?

A. Yes. When we import films we only exhibit them ourselves.

Q. On what arrangement do you distribute your pictures? Supposing, you produce a picture, on what arrangement do you give it to other people? Is it on a percentage basis or a fixed rent?

A. Fixed rent.

Q. Which is the most successful of your pictures?

A. "Krishna Sakha"

Q. When was it produced?

A. In 1926.

Q. For how long was it shown here?

A. For four weeks in Calcutta.

Q. Where was it shown?

A. In the Purna Theatre and the Star Theatre.

Q. Was the piece very popular?

A. Oh yes.

Q. Do you attempt to show in any other usual cinema theatre, say for instance, what you call the Crown Theatre?

A. No.

Q. Where was it shown for four weeks?

A. Two weeks at the Purna Theatre and two weeks at the Star Theatre.

Q. Is it being shown anywhere else?

A. Not in Calcutta but in the villages of Bengal it is still being shown,—by the touring cinema companies.

Q. How many touring companies are there in Bengal?

A. More than twenty.

Q. That was the last one you produced. You have not produced any other picture since then, only topical?

A. And Public Health Department films.

Q. Did you make a good profit out of this "Krishna Sakha" piece?

Mr. A. N. Bose: The income is very slow. It is not enough for starting on any other thing again.

Q. Have you got back what you spent.

A. Yes.

Q. How much did you spend?

A. About Rs. 2,000. Professor Bose looks to the production side, I look after the management.

Q. We do not mind who gives the answer. You spend about Rs. 2,000?

A. Yes. We have made more than that.

Q. Why then don't you produce other pieces? What are your difficulties?

A. We produce one film and then have to wait for the return and then produce another.

Q. Now you have got the return on this film?

A. Since then we have produced a five reel film, "Maternity," for which we have not yet been paid in full by the Government.

*Q.* What footage was that?

*A.* About 7,000 feet. It had to be cut down as it was too big for publicity purposes.

*Q.* Do you keep any permanent establishment?

*A.* Oh! yes.

*Q.* And is it a paying business to you?

*A.* It pays slowly according to the capital we can put into it.

*Q.* What is your difficulty then? Why don't you produce more films? Is there not a demand for Indian pictures?

*A.* We have not got big capital behind us. We cannot produce on a large scale. We are getting on slowly and are making gradual progress and we are satisfied.

*Q.* What are the difficulties in the way of progress?

*A.* Insufficient capital is the main thing.

*Q.* Why can't you apply to the ordinary banker and get the money?

*Professor Bose :* Bankers are not enterprising enough here. The Imperial Bank will not help. As for other Banks,—Indian Banks—of course you know the history of Indian banking.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer :* What about the Marwaris?

*A.* They charge prohibitive rates of interest; it won't be a paying proposition.

*Chairman :* You are handicapped then by want of capital?

*A.* That is our principal difficulty.

*Q.* You don't think there is any difficulty about getting actors and actresses?

*A.* They are available.

*Q.* From good families?

*A.* Oh yes, from good families so far as actors are concerned. In fact some of my friends,—professors and graduates,—have now taken to the stage.

*Q.* Talking about actresses, who were the actresses whom you got for this play?

*A.* They were stage actresses.

*Q.* You took the actors from a fairly respectable class of people?

*A.* Yes, the actors were all respectable people. The stage, whatever may have been the case in the past, has considerably improved now and stage actors are all drawn from the respectable classes.

*Q.* So you think there will be no difficulty in getting actors on the ground that they will have to associate with undesirable people.

*A.* No, especially in cinema pictures. We can always get respectable people for the cinema because they have not to come personally before the public gaze. We hope to get respectable actresses also in future.

*Q.* Now about banking facilities, is there any other difficulty you feel as a producer?

*A.* We have quite sufficient talent if we can train them up. So far as materials are concerned, as long as high duty is imposed on raw materials, the business cannot be very profitable.

*Q.* You want raw materials to come free?

*A.* Yes, duty free.

*Q.* Anything else?

*A.* And for the time being we want also imported pictures, because our indigenous pictures are insufficient. We cannot supply enough films to suit the tastes of different peoples. We also want to develop the cinema taste and create it where it does not exist so that afterwards we may have large market for our supplies. Therefore, so long as there is not a large supply of indigenous pictures, we have to depend very much upon imported pictures; and consequently the high import duties now stand in our way.

Q. You are speaking now as an exhibitor?

A. Also from the point of view of creating a taste for the cinema.

Q. In order to advance the growth of the film industry here, don't you think foreign competition should be somewhat reduced?

A. Not now. Now a days we are able to produce good films, but fair competition is necessary for further development of the industry. Protection may help some monopolists now, but that would not be desirable from public point of view.

Q. They say it is more costly to run the Indian pictures than a foreign picture?

A. So far as our experience goes, it is more profitable to run an Indian picture.

Q. It may be more profitable to the exhibitor, but he has to pay more for it, has he not?

A. Yes, because we have not got a sufficient supply of Indian films to-day.

Q. Then what do you propose should be done to increase the growth of Indian production?

A. There should be free allowance of raw materials.

Q. Suppose you don't impose any import duty on foreign pictures, then they will compete on easy terms with Indian pictures. In such circumstances, how do you expect Indian pictures to flourish?

A. There is a taste created for Indian pictures, and if we show religious or mythological pictures or social dramas, people will surely come. Indian pictures have their own value, and we do not care for the competition by western films.

Q. How many cinema theatres are there in Calcutta?

A. There are about 12.

Q. In how many of them are Indian pictures shown?

A. Most of them belong to a particular company.

Q. That particular company shows both Indian and western films, does it not?

A. Yes.

Q. Do they show both kinds of pictures in all their theatres?

A. No, they show Indian films only in the theatres which are situated in the Indian quarters. They don't show these in the theatres situated in the European quarters because the audience is composed of non-Indians and they won't appreciate the Indian films.

Q. You spoke just now about the company having control over so many theatres and thereby having a monopoly?

A. Please see my answer to your question No. 9. There is one firm which is a large importer of foreign films, and all their pictures are taken by another very big firm—I won't name it—leaving only a few crumbs as it were for people like us.

Q. What do you mean by "us"?

A. For poorer companies like ours. Of course, they don't prevent us from taking their pictures, but if big concerns compete, it will be impossible for us to keep pace with them. They can pay higher prices and we cannot compete with them, with the result that we have to depend upon only those pictures which are rejected by them.

Q. If Madans or somebody else will do that, what do you expect us to do in the matter?

A. That is why I complain of insufficiency of capital.

Q. You don't expect the Government to help the trade?

A. Certainly not, but they can help us in many other ways. I simply want that the monopoly should be abolished here.

**Q.** They don't acquire their monopoly by illegal means?

**A.** We have no capitalists here to compete with them.

**Q.** Why should you blame them? Why should you not as an influential man get together a few people and start a rival company?

**A.** I am not blaming them—I am rather blaming ourselves. I have already told you about the lack of enterprise and insufficiency of capital. We have got artistic taste and intelligence, and if we can combine the enterprising habit of Bombay with the artistic taste and brains of Bengal, our success is sure. We have been trying to combine, but unfortunately we have not been successful so far. Personally speaking, I have been trying my utmost in this matter, because it is my ambition to develop this industry, but so far I have not been successful. I can only hope that the day will come when I shall attain my object.

**Q.** Therefore, do you want this committee to do anything in the matter?

**A.** They can do some kind of propaganda work.

**Q.** What sort of propaganda work?

**A.** The Government can help us.

**Q.** How do you expect Government to help you?

**A.** I have answered that in detail in my written statement to question No. 18. (Reads the answer in detail.)

**Q.** You refer to the establishment of training classes, for what purpose?

**A.** For training photographers and artists, so that in future you may be able to produce your own films here on a better scale.

**Q.** You want experts to be brought out on short term contracts to train the people of this country and also send people abroad for getting training, and you want that Government should do all those things?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Do you think the existing companies will be able to comply with the orders of Government in every respect?

**A.** We have already produced films according to such orders.

**Q.** There too Madans will compete with you?

**A.** In that line we can certainly compete with Madans. We yield to none in that respect.

**Q.** You don't want any preference?

**A.** No.

**Q.** It should be by tender, I suppose. At what rate are you supplying films to Government?

**A.** At Rs. 2 a foot.

**Q.** Who has got the negative? Do you have it or the Government?

**A.** It is not yet clear. We have to fight that out. That is a question of negotiation and bargaining.

**Q.** If there is only one producer, he may charge even Rs. 5 a foot?

**A.** If there is a monopoly, it will certainly come to that, but certainly Government is not a fool.

**Colonel Crawford :** Rs. 2 is the lowest for which you can supply films to Government?

**A.** We can cut down our prices if we are given large orders.

**Chairman :** You don't think that Government should establish a studio and maintain experts?

**A.** Let Government open a training class.

**Q.** But the studio will also be useful for training?

**A.** Certainly.

**Q.** Why should not Government produce their own films in a studio like that? Why should they give out their work to private companies?

A. That is the look out of the Government, because it is an admitted fact that when Government runs a concern, they don't run it on economical lines. But still we should like them to establish a studio only for training artists, camera men and so on.

Q. Should it be on payment or what?

A. The fee should be as low as possible.

Q. Do you find any difficulty in getting foreign films?

A. I have already said that there is a monopoly here.

Sir Haroon Jaffer : Why don't you outbid Madans?

A. No money.

Chairman : You have been a professor so long. Do you think the cinema has any baneful effect upon the youth of the country?

A. Please read my answer in my written statement to question No. 24 (Reads the answer.)

Q. Is that your experience?

A. Yes. You may call it a coincidence, but I believe that motor car dacoities and other things have come to the knowledge of our people only after the cinemas have come into existence.

Q. Did they not come into existence after the motor car was introduced in this country?

A. I don't think so.

Q. Do you think the motor car dacoities are due to cinema?

A. I have already told you they cannot directly be connected, but when you put all facts together, you come to that conclusion.

Q. Do you believe that there is any increase of crime due to the cinema?

A. That is very difficult to answer. The existence of crime in a place may be due to several circumstances. There may have been an increase due to the cinema, but it is a matter for the police to say.

Q. If you cannot give us any information say so?

A. That is my impression, but it is not based on any actual experience.

Q. The police have told us that they do not believe it.

A. They may have told you so, but the people don't believe it.

Q. You believe the cinema is productive of crime?

A. In certain instances the cinema has undoubtedly a bad effect on some temperaments. They try to emulate the things they see.

Q. Do you think then that you should stop all these foreign films?

A. No, because there are censors. We have to look to many things. There are certain films which are called "Box office attractions" which may not be very moral in the strict sense. We have to make allowance for certain things. You should try and find out the difference between what is altogether immoral and what is not. The censors are doing it, but they are not always guided by proper considerations. If you will allow me to say so, the inspectors selected for the purpose are mostly from the police force, not only for censoring films, but also for censoring dramas. I have practical experience in this matter. I know very well what kind of people inspect these things. They have practically no artistic taste, nor have they any special educational qualifications, nor any expert knowledge of the market and things of that sort. They are simply drawn from the sub-inspectors or police inspectors, and therefore, when they examine these things, they do so purely from a police point of view, and that, I am afraid, is the political point of view. I know from experience that several dramas have been cut for political or communal reasons.

Q. I am afraid you are straying away from the subject. Do you mean to say that the police are not interested in checking crime?

A. Yes, they are.



*Q.* It is very difficult for us to follow you. Please confine yourself to films suggestive of crimes. Do you think the censorship as regards crime films is not adequate?

*A.* I think it is adequate, so far as it goes.

*Q.* Then as regards the demoralising effect on the people, you said that certain scenes are necessary in order to attract people. Do you think the censorship is adequate there?

*A.* Sometimes it is not. I think there ought to be stricter censorship in certain cases,—e.g., "Sex" films.

*Q.* Do you think it will effect the trade if stricter censorship is adopted?

*A.* I should prefer to follow a middle course.

*Q.* My question is whether that middle path is sufficiently middle in your opinion?

*A.* I have not much to complain about.

*Q.* What is the other complaint about censorship you have to make. You say there is too much of censoring in certain points that savours of politics?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* You think there is too much of censoring from a political point of view. Do you think, as a producer or as a writer of dramas, it interferes with the story or with the literary art?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Are you inconvenienced at all by the censorship?

*A.* Generally speaking, not much. I have already said that, on the whole, it is satisfactory, (Reads his written answer from his own statement) except on the points mentioned before.

*Q.* You want the composition of the censorship Board to be enlarged by introducing a larger element of Indians?

*A.* Non-official Indians,—educationists, artists and representatives of the film industry should also be on it.

*Q.* You want the film industry not only to make representations but also to decide?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* We understand that the trade is given an opportunity to make representations?

*A.* That is a different thing from having a voice on the Board.

*Q.* Don't you think they will be interested in the question?

*A.* Certainly, I think so.

*Q.* And you won't mind it?

*A.* No.

*Mr. Green :* You say they will not be impartial?

*A.* They will come and help us.

*Chairman :* What is your reason for advocating a larger element of non-official Indians?

*A.* The official angle of vision differs from the non-official angle.

*Q.* Is it only as regards political matters or also as regards all matters?

*A.* It is mostly confined to political matters. I want that a larger proportion of Indians should be on the censorship Board.

*Mr. Green :* I understood you to say that you took films to the villages. Had you to take your own generator?

*A.* Yes. We had also to take a license from the local authorities.

*Q.* And you believe there are about 20 travelling cinemas?

*A.* More than 20.

*Q.* In the course of a year how many times does one particular outfit return to the same village.

A. Generally they come back once in a year. They show the same film in every village.

Q. It does not give a very extended market to the Indian industry?

A. If a touring company visits a village only once in a year it requires only one programme. The wider the field it has, the greater the time it will take, and for that purpose it might require several programmes.

Q. You told us that you did not want tariff protection.

A. For the present.

Q. You said it is more costly to produce Indian films than to import one from abroad.

A. We can produce it much cheaper here.

Q. I thought you said that the theatres found it more expensive to exhibit Indian films?

A. Yes.

Q. Nevertheless, they make a bigger profit.

A. Yes, but you cannot produce Indian pictures. And if and when they produce more Indian pictures, we shall not require western films at all.

Q. I was very interested to find that you as a producer did not want protection.

A. But our opinion may not be shared by others. In our opinion, we want an extensive market at present to supply our needs.

*Colonel Crawford* : As a producer do you find any difficulty in getting your films exhibited.

A. No. Generally speaking, we find a ready market for our production.

Q. I gathered that you complained of a monopoly in the exhibition line.

A. There are certain firms who own all the theatres and we sometimes don't find it convenient to exhibit our pictures.

Q. But they take them, do they not?

A. Yes, but at their own price.

Q. Do you seriously suggest that in the public interest we should prevent monopolies.

A. Certainly.

Q. How can we do it?

A. There must be more companies, and I hope the Government will come to our help in that matter. They should open a pavilion where we can show our own pictures.

Q. Which is more profitable to you, an entertainment film or a public utility film.

A. Entertainment Film.

Q. I understand the Indian market is short of entertainment films?

A. Exactly.

Q. Therefore, will you have any time for producing public utility films also if you want to produce entertainment films, which you say are more profitable.

A. Yes, because public utility films would give us quicker returns, and we get larger profits on the entertainment films over a longer period.

Q. If you had sufficient capital you would not probably waste your time in producing a public utility film but you would go in for profit-earning films like the entertainment films.

A. We may take the public utility films as a side line in that case.

Q. Please be perfectly frank with me. Do you think that it will be cheaper from the taxpayer's point of view to get the public utility films produced by private companies than if the Government produced them themselves?

A. It will be cheaper to Government.

**Q.** Your rate now is Rs. 2 per foot but I know that Government with its resources has been able to produce films at 3 annas a foot.

**A.** I question that, because I know that the Central Publicity Bureau have been offering films in the Calcutta market at a certain price saying that it was their actual cost. But I showed them that could not possibly be their cost, because they were not taking into account their overhead charges. For this department they want cameramen, artists and other highly paid men, and they never took into account these charges.

**Q.** Then your suggestion is that instead of Government giving direct financial assistance, they might definitely adopt the policy of giving the work of producing public utility films to private firms on a contract system.

**A.** If there is a tender there will be competition.

**Q.** Regarding the representation of the trade on the Board, what portion of the trade would you put on the Board, would you put a producer or a distributor?

**A.** Producers should be put on.

**Q.** Why should you not have the exhibitor on the Board?

**A.** It depends upon the man.

**Q.** Have you any trade combination in Bengal?

**A.** No.

**Q.** The nomination will have to be made by Government?

**A.** If you ask the trade, they can unite and send up a suitable representative.

**Q.** Would you be quite agreeable to having one of Madan's men on the censor Board?

**A.** That company can be one of the electors.

**Mr. Coatsman :** What is the area of the market for your pictures? Where do you show them?

**A.** Bengal and Assam, because our pictures are intended mostly for Bengali audience.

**Q.** I suppose you never tried to send them to any place outside India?

**A.** I should like to see how they will be accepted outside. But I don't think there is a market for us in foreign countries, nor in India except Bihar, Orissa and Assam outside the Bengal Province.

**Q.** What I was thinking of was whether you have tried to send your pictures to places where you have a definite Indian population, I mean places like Mombasa or Singapore.

**A.** Some of our films may find a market there, I think they will be very good markets for our pictures.

**Q.** Do you get a sufficient return from your small markets in Bengal and Assam?

**A.** Yes, we do.

**Q.** When you finish your films, how do you market them?

**A.** If we want to show it in Calcutta, we go to a show house and enter into a contract with them and give them the film at a fixed rental.

**Q.** Do the people away from Bengal take the films personally or have you to write to them about your films?

**A.** The touring companies come and hire them from us.

**Q.** Am I correct in assuming that most of your films are taken by touring companies?

**A.** Some of them have started permanent shows in outstations like Dacca, Serampore and other places and they use our films.

**Q.** To come to the question of finance. You told the Chairman that you found it impossible to get the banks to advance money to you for any Indian industry and not for the film industry alone. Did you try to get advances on any of your films? How did you try?

A. Unfortunately we do not find any such banks here which can lend us money on the security of our films. There was only one bank, namely, the Bengal National Bank, and that has failed. Once we tried to get some money from them and they refused. First we showed the film and asked them for some money against it so that we might proceed with the production and they refused. In fact, there is no bank here which is willing to advance money on the security of our films. That is the difficulty.

Q. Was that the only bank you tried?

A. Yes.

Q. You never tried any European banks?

A. With the certainty of failure.

Q. Would you have any objection in telling me with what capital you started your concern?

A. We started with a nominal capital of Rs. 5,000. Then we had to borrow money from friends and money lenders. We never invited public subscriptions.

Q. Of course, you know there are several other producers in Calcutta. Have you ever thought of joining forces with them? By joining forces, I mean you have carried on for some years, you have the requisite experience, the goodwill, the technical knowledge and everything required to start an up to date studio. What you lack is capital. Have you ever thought of combining with other concerns?

A. We tried to combine on several occasions, but did not succeed, because so long as they can get on, they will not recognise us. The chief drawback here is want of enterprise and mutual confidence.

Q. Have you ever thought of starting a co-operative film producing industry?

A. No.

Q. Do you think it would be a good idea?

A. We have not tried it. But the idea is good.

Mr. Neogy : Under the statute the non-officials should at least be half the total number on the Board?

A. Yes. There should be a majority of non-official Indians on the Board, because they will have to examine mostly Indian films.

Q. I have heard that occasionally the trade is denied even the ordinary courtesy in the office of the censor and that they are not sometimes offered even a seat when they go to see the boss there. Have you heard of any such thing?

(The witness hesitated to reply.)

I don't want you to get into trouble with the authorities by giving an answer. If you feel any such apprehension you need not reply.

A. I do not like to make a statement on the point.

Q. Is that one of the reasons why you want the trade to be represented on the Board so that they may extend to you the ordinary courtesies which you are now denied? (The witness hesitated again to reply.) If you don't like to answer say so.

Mr. Green : Can you put your questions and tell the witness that he need not answer them.

Mr. Neogy : He has already told us that he does not want to get into trouble with the authorities.

A. I don't want to answer that question.

Mr. Neogy : Then we can draw our own conclusions, it is not?

Chairman : If you wish to make your statement *in camera* by all means say so.

Mr. Neogy : If you are afraid of any body, you can make your statement *in camera*.

*Chairman* : There is no use of making such insinuations. If you want to make a statement, and, if you are afraid of anybody, say so, and you can make it in camera. Otherwise I can't draw any inference.

*A.* I am not asking you to draw any inference.

*Mr. Neogy* : Have you heard any such complaint?

*A.* I would rather be silent about it.

*Q.* That may not be your experience, but have you heard any such complaint from others?

*A.* Hearsay cannot be proper evidence.

*Q.* Then you have heard such complaint, I suppose?

*A.* Yes, I have heard it.

*Q.* Now, have you any studio of your own?

*A.* Yes, in a small way; we have got our own camera men, our dark room and so on and we call it a studio; it is not quite up to date.

*Q.* It does not come up to your expectations?

*A.* We are not satisfied with it.

*Q.* Perhaps you are aware that there are better studios in Bombay?

*A.* I have not seen them.

*Q.* Supposing there is a first class studio which is available to you for hire. Would you like to take advantage of this facility and go down to Bombay to produce your pictures?

*A.* That would mean great expense which we could not afford.

*Q.* Do you think it will be feasible for any private producing Companies in Calcutta to take advantage of such studios in Bombay?

*A.* I think there are such companies here.

*Q.* One of the ideas is that the Government should have a first class studio set up somewhere—it may be in Bombay or the Punjab and not necessarily in Bengal—which will be available to private producers. Do you think such a studio will be of great use to private producers?

*A.* It all depends upon the distance.

*Q.* What possibility do you think there is of the Indian pictures now produced finding a market abroad except in place where there is a considerable Indian population?

*A.* There is not much scope.

*Q.* You have come in contact with Europeans, and with very many of them during your educational career?

*A.* Yes, not only that. I wanted to start a very big company to develop the Indian film business, and I wanted to find out whether there was market for them outside India. I corresponded with some people in America, and the replies received by me were not hopeful. They said that they might welcome a few Indian pictures only as a matter of novelty or curiosity.

*Q.* To see what they might call the uncultured people, and provoke laughter at the expense of the Indians?

*A.* Yes, I think so.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer* : Do you allow the renters of your films to view them before they enter into a contract with you?

*A.* We allow them to see the Indian pictures, but not the foreign pictures, because we ourselves cannot preview foreign pictures.

*Q.* Whenever you send out an order for pictures, oftentimes they send you pictures different to those which you actually indented for?

*A.* Very seldom.

*Q.* In your reply to No. 13, you say that the duty on second hand films should be reduced. Do you mean to say that the duty charged on new films and second hand films is the same?

*A.* Yes, and I want the duty on the second hand films to be reduced.

*Chairman* : So that you want even useless films to come to India?

*A.* Second hand films are not always useless.

*Mr. Green* : Once it is used elsewhere, it becomes second hand. How are the Customs Officers to know that it is second hand film?

*A.* They send us a list.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer* : I suppose you require some concession in the tariff too?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* You pay the same scale of duty for news reels?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Would you prefer to have a reduced rate of duty for news reels just as there are reduced rates for press telegrams?

*A.* Yes.

*Chairman* : Do you think it will help the production of Indian films?

*A.* I have already told you that we must break down the existing monopoly so that we may be able to produce a sufficient number of films here.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer* : You think that news reels will be of great use to students.

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* How many films have you produced this year?

*A.* We have produced only two, one for educational purposes and the other respecting public health. One is 6 reels and the other 7 reels, and each reel is about 1,000 feet long. The Government purchased them from us.

*Q.* You are a regular producer of films?

*A.* We wish to be.

*Q.* At the expense of others I suppose?

*A.* That is only the case with trade. Every trade does so.

### **Supplementary Written Statement of the Aurora Cinema Co., Calcutta, dated the 23rd December 1927.**

Under instruction from the President we enclose herewith copies of the Licenses\* we have to take out in connection with our Cinema Shows:—

#### *Police—*

1. Exhibitors License (Under Cinematograph Act 1918).
2. Film Censor Certificate (Under Cinematograph Act 1918).
3. Operators License (Under Cinematograph Act 1918).

#### *Corporation—*

1. Exhibitors License (Under Corporation Act III (B. C.) of 1923).
2. Fire Brigade License (Under Ware-house Act).
3. Trade License (Under Municipal Act).

We take this opportunity to emphasise the following points which we particularly wish to bring to the notice of the Committee, we want:—

- (1) a Central Licensing office for Police License for the Exhibitors to remain in force for one year;

(At present, according to the Cinematograph Act, we are to pay Rs. 5 for any period up to 2 months, but actually these Licenses are issued to us for 15 days only, after the expiration of that period we are to pay Rs. 5 again for 15 days and so on. Permanent House owners have to pay only Rs. 25 per year, if we are to remain in one place we are to pay Rs. 120 a year.)

- (2) reduction of import duty on secondhand foreign films;
- (3) the Censor Office to instal Projecting Machine for projection of the films submitted to them for Censoring.

**Written Statement of Mr. B. V. RAYAL, Managing Director, Indian Kinema Arts Producing Co., Calcutta, dated the 15th December 1927.**

1. I have been conversant with the film industry in Bombay (except its technical side) for a period of nearly 7 years. On account of my existing situation with Indian Kinema Arts, my experience has been concentrated upon promotion of good productions at present. I have during my past career acquired special knowledge of distribution and also I have been carrying on distribution business under the name and style of The Universal Film Service, specially organised for distribution of Indian Kinema Arts' productions and many suitable Indian films.

2. (a) In metropolis such as Calcutta, Bombay and Madras the standard of the literate class is higher by about 75 per cent. but, generally speaking, of smaller towns, the illiterate class predominates (this answer refers to the condition throughout India).

(b) The 1st class theatres in every city are composed of a cosmopolitan crowd.

(c) More or less 20 to 25 per cent. of the audience consists of children below 14 or adolescents.

3. Generally Mythological films are yet more popular with Indian audiences.

4. Exhibitors are trying their utmost to cater for their audience with such films.

5. Indian films are not readily available for exhibitors.

(a) They are of satisfactory quality no doubt.

(b) They are largely patronized.

(c) It is more profitable to show Indian films than Western films.

The first successful films in motion-picture history of India were "Lankadahan," "Krishna Janma" and "Kaliyamarden" produced by Mr. D. G. Phalke of The Hindustan Cinema Films which gave impetus to many capitalists in Bombay to rush to this industry. It was in 1918 or so, but ever since then there are many more successful films provincially, but could not meet steady and universal appeal throughout India; and yet those three films referred to above are not out of date yet for mass audiences. These films have earned a fortune for the company.

6. It is a decided fact that Indian films appeal more than the prevalent Western films.

(b) 1. To educated classes films depicting national literature and history.

2. To illiterate classes mythological and historical.

8. (a) There is no chance at present for sufficient output. The impression of motion-picture industry is mingled with dramatic arts that enthusiast capitalists feel indignant to launch upon this industry, especially otherwise those who could make big combine and establish the industry on a well organized plans. As regards distribution and exhibition there are a sufficient number of Cinemas and distributing agencies with expert knowledge which can support the good amount of output.

(b) It could be devised by giving facility to utilize Government properties on reasonable remunerative payments, special recommendations to Indian States for film work, as also concessions and licences on Railways, Steamships, Government and Indian States' spots and places as the first aid to this industry, are presently needed.

9. Good films are not readily available to the exhibitors as there is not sufficient output. I mean the number of positive copies as would reasonably be required to cope with the demand of exhibitors. There has been no monopoly or such tendency to my knowledge.

10. The systems of "block" and "blind" bookings only exist in India to a very small extent but not in first run or key theatres.

11. The Exhibitors have no facilities for previewing films themselves but more often than not they have their representatives or booking agency to report the merits of the films which are being released from month to month.

12. The amusement tax is no doubt a handicap to exhibitors specially with Indian audiences.

13. The present tariff on imported films makes it impossible for renters to purchase second and third class quality films. In many cases tariff charges come as high as or more than the cost of such films and therefore the exhibitors cannot obtain a cheap supply during the bad season (monsoon) when they have the upkeep of their cinema shows. Therefore a reasonable rebate of the present tariff generally will be good encouragement.

14. Most certainly the increased use of the cinema for educational purposes in schools and for adult education in agriculture, public health, as well as films with special educative value and propaganda behind them would greatly help the growth of the film industry in this country.

There is not much demand so far, as the schools and other educational institutes are unable to meet cost of equipping machines, etc., for projecting these films.

15. The conditions to develop the Indian film producing industry on a larger scale are very favourable indeed. The cost of film production would be decidedly very low for an average good film, for a well organized film concern to the greater amount of efficiency that hitherto should have been achieved by any existing producer.

16. But there are not a number of suitable Indian producers, directors, actors, actresses, scenario writers, cameramen with technical knowledge required, to depend upon substantial output of real competitive exhibition value.

In order to remedy the deficiency, I do not find any practical suggestion except that the Indian producers have always to encourage young enthusiasts to adopt the film work actually in all its branches. And also, at special recommendation, Government should grant facility for higher training abroad.

17. It is quite likely to find sufficient capital sooner, indignant feelings on capitalists could be removed by practical results.

18. Of course legislative action of the Government on matters of concessions and licences to and as to in my reply No. 8 (b) will be highly encouraging to private enterprises for film productions.

19. The cost of production is no doubt infinitely lower when compared with the other countries, but the Indian films stand on proportionate cost when compared with its market, i.e., the foreign films receive the world's market whereas the Indian films have to depend on the market in India only.

20. No. It is not reasonably necessary to involve expenditure from Government funds.

21. It is not advisable for the Government to create state agency to undertake the management of film industry as a monopoly.

22. As to my opinion the films of real competitive merits must find the market of its own without reciprocity and participation in British Empire films and Indian films under the outlined policy referred to.

## PART II.

24. (a) I do not think that the films shown in this country have any demoralizing effect on the public.

(b) No such circulation at all to my knowledge.

(c) I have not seen any film that I considered harmful for any class or section of people.



(d) Censorship is decidedly satisfactory, both on

(1) "Sex films," and

(2) "Crime films."

(e) No, I don't think so.

25. The present method of censorship is quite satisfactory, and I don't think any improved method could help better Western social customs to Eastern outlook.

26. (a) No. The present method is absolutely satisfactory.

(b) Yes. "The Life of Budha" was the only film to offend the Buddhists in Burma.

27. No doubt such films are very well censored. The uneducated Indians take it only as the custom of the Western civilization without misunderstanding.

(b) I do not know any such incident.

28. I don't think so at all.

29. No. Not necessary at all.

30. There should not be any restriction to children at all. Of course I am not in favour of prohibition.

31. Yes. Censorship is quite an effective method of guarding against misuse of the film.

32. It is quite satisfactory.

33. (a) Certainly a strict censorship would be a hinderance to the trade and interfere with the recreation of the people.

(b) No doubt it will involve a falling off in the attendance at cinema also.

(c) And will leave no more already required freedom for artists and inspirational development.

34. (a) The present Boards are more facilitating to all people concerned in the trade than any Central Board.

(1) A Central Board is not a real necessity.

(2) No doubt it will create a very great inconvenience to the trade.

(b) I don't think a Central Board in addition to existing Provincial Board is desirable or a necessity.

35. (a) Yes, the constitution of present Provincial Boards is satisfactory.

(b) To my impression it is already so at Bombay and Calcutta.

36. The method of examining the films by Inspectors subordinate to the Board is also quite satisfactory at present, and they are just well qualified to do it. Of course I cannot suggest special qualification except that one with discrimination and talent can do the work.

(b) I don't think all the films should be examined by the Board necessarily, except in cases where discrimination of the subordinate inspector of the Board is not properly exercised. It will be difficult to constitute Board of gentlemen of suitable standing to devote their time even for a reasonable remuneration.

40. I don't think it is practically possible and useful to censor publicity matters. I have not noticed any such objectionable advertisements.

41. No, I never noticed before any demoralizing films.

42. There is suitably enough co-operation between the trade and censorship at present.

43. No, there should not be stricter control over imports and exports of films.

44. The public bodies and the press are reasonably assisting at present in maintaining and patronizing of a good standard of films.

45. (a) I don't think it would be constructive to suggest Government control over film production or would likely better the condition of the industry.

(b) Yes, all the producing concerns must be registered, licenced, and the studios periodically inspected.

**Oral Evidence of Mr. B. Y. RAYAL, Managing Director, Mr. JAYA GOPAL PILLAI, Producer, Mr. JAI GOPAL, Financier, Mr. K. P. GHOSE, Producer of "Shankaracharya," and cameramen of the Indian Kinema Arts Producing Co., Calcutta, on Thursday, the 15th December 1927.**

*Chairman:* I suppose, except Mr. Pillai, the others have not had any experience of foreign countries.

*Mr. Pillai:* I have had training in foreign countries in all branches of the industry, namely, in acting, photography and other allied things. I had nearly four years' training.

*Q.* How long has this company been going on?

*A.* For nearly a year. We have so far produced only two pictures, "Shankaracharya" and "Incarnation". "Shankaracharya" was produced by me and the other was produced by my friend. Both are Indian films connected with mythology.

*Q.* Have you had a good run for these pictures?

*A.* We released "Shankaracharya" first.

*Q.* How long has it been in the field?

*A.* It has been running for about six weeks in Calcutta.

*Q.* Has "Incarnation" been exhibited at all?

*A.* It had only one run here, and it has been sent away to Karachi.

*Q.* How is it that "Shankaracharya" ran for six weeks and the other ran for only one week although it is a better production?

*A.* I do not know.

*Q.* What is the opinion of your company, whether "Shankaracharya" or "Incarnation" is better?

*A.* The press were very kind to me without my prevailing upon them and they praised both.

*Q.* We have seen both the pictures, and we think that "Incarnation" is certainly a better production than "Shankaracharya".

*Mr. Rayal:* Mr. Pillai does not possess any exploitation experience and so he is not able to give answers.

*Q.* We do consider "Incarnation" superior to "Shankaracharya" and we are struck with the fact that while "Incarnation" had only a six or seven days' run here, "Shankaracharya" had a run for six weeks and it is still going. What is the reason for it?

*Mr. Rayal:* Because "Incarnation" had proper vernacular titles on it and it could be presented to a mass audience. The reason why we released it earlier is because some of our bookings were blocked in Bombay, and so, before sending it to the mofussil places in Bombay circuit, we thought it better to send it to Bombay first. That is why we selected a theatre here not with an eye to income but as a formality. We ran the film "Incarnation" in the Albion theatre in Corporation Street and the receipts were quite double those for American pictures.

*Q.* Do you mean to say that you had entered into a contract with others and that is why you had to send it away without showing it in Calcutta?

*A.* We have so many other copies also, but unless we release these pictures in a metropolitan town, we cannot give them to the mofussil districts.

*Q.* But you have given it a trial in Calcutta?

*A.* We have bookings in hand and we will also show that film here.

*Q.* Do you think it has a bright future in Calcutta?

*A.* Certainly. But it will all depend upon how we exploit the picture.

**Q.** Did you send it away because, being a philosophical subject, common people don't understand it, and "Shankaracharya" being a popular theme people understood it better? Is that the reason?

**A.** We have not been able to find it out yet as we have not given a fair trial to it.

*Colonel Crawford:* Are the captions all in English?

**A.** Yes, but we are going to show them in all the prominent Indian languages, but we have not yet done so.

*Chairman:* Now, have you any difficulties as producers?

**A.** There are not enough artists and technical people here, but we can find them in plenty in Bombay. There are not suitable actors and actresses in Calcutta.

**Q.** But we were just told by a professor that you can get actors and actresses very easily?

**A.** But not with that distinct 'film face' in Bengal. The main reason is that there has not been enough of enterprise in Bengal for a very long time. There may be some people, but they have not got much chance here.

**Q.** Should anything be done to develop the industry? You don't think that any steps are needed on the part of the Government?

**A.** I don't think so.

*Mr. Pillai:* I think the Government might give us some concessions in railway freights for travelling troupes, concession tickets to view public places and recommendations to the Indian States so that we may start our own theatres and also produce films.

**Q.** Did you ever apply for such facilities to any Indian States? Did you make any attempt by writing to the Government of India?

**A.** Yes. We had applied to the Udaipur State through the Resident, but we did not get any satisfactory reply. We find difficulties especially in Indian States.

**Q.** Do you want such facilities to be given to all people? Supposing an American Company comes to India to take films. Do you think they should also be given the same facilities as would be given to Indian producers? As a producer, we want to know your opinion?

**A.** There is no harm in giving them such facilities.

**Q.** Will you be content with equal facilities being given to producers, whether they are foreign or Indian?

**A.** Yes, there is no harm in it.

**Q.** We were told in another place that such facilities should only be given to purely Indian concerns?

**A.** Why should there be a sort of partiality?

**Q.** You don't think the country should be partial to its own countrymen?

**A.** No.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* Should they be asked to engage Indian actors or actresses or should we give them the option to bring their own staff?

**A.** Let them bring their own staff if they like.

*Chairman:* What about Government aid? Do you advocate scholarships abroad?

*Mr. Pillai:* On the recommendation of recognised companies, the Government should award scholarships to suitable people to go abroad and learn the industry.

**Q.** Where should they be sent? Where did you receive your training?

**A.** There are no specific facilities available in England. I have been to Germany and I received my training there. There are abundant facilities in Germany for Indian students.

*Mr. Green:* Had you to learn the German language?

**A. Yes.**

*Chairman:* Do you think it is difficult to learn the language?

**A.** If you want to take up the profession and get training in Germany, you will have to learn the language.

**Q.** Do you think that difficulty should stand in the way? Would you not give scholarships to Germany because you have to learn the language?

**A.** No, I would not say that.

**Q.** What about sending for experts from Germany and other countries.

**A.** That would be more expensive than sending people from here.

**Q.** In what subjects do you want them trained?—photography, acting and direction?

**A.** Direction is a thing which cannot be learned. One has to be born with a talent for directing.

**Q.** Even inborn talent has sometimes to be developed.

**A.** It is like writing novels. You cannot manufacture novels if you haven't the genius for writing.

**Q.** You think production is an inborn talent?

**A.** To a great extent.

**Q.** You don't think people gain anything by going in for training in direction?

**A.** I wouldn't say that.

**Q.** Now what do you think of Government establishing a model studio? A model studio to produce their own films with experts in it to undertake the direction.

**A.** No doubt, it would benefit many but I don't think Government would benefit in any manner.

**Q.** But, after all, the Government exists to benefit the many. Will it benefit the industry?

**A.** Not unless there is a certain mutual benefit.

**Q.** What is the Government except the public? What is your conception of the public? Are they different from the public?

**A.** Not quite. But I don't think we have come to that stage.

**Mr. Raval:** Where will this studio be situated?

**Q.** For instance, in Bengal.

**A.** If it is in Bengal, I would advocate it.

**Mr. Neogy:** And if it is anywhere else?

**A.** Then it won't be useful to us.

**Mr. Green:** You don't object to training abroad. You are prepared to go to Germany to get training, but not to Bombay to a studio?

**A.** But that to learn, not to produce. We can't go to produce.

*Chairman:* Please understand the point. I am not pledged to any view. I only put different aspects. Now the question is Government have got certain films to produce for educational and propaganda purposes, public health, etc. Now the Government have produced certain films, industrial, educational, agricultural and other things. They can either make it through a private agency or by establishing a studio of their own for that purpose which would be more useful to the public?

**Mr. Pillai:** I personally think to establish their own studio will be the better.

**Q.** Do you agree in that?

**Mr. Raval:** Yes.

**Q.** You don't agree?

**Mr. Jai Gopal:** Yes, I think it will be profitable for them to establish their own studio. I cannot say it will be very efficient.

*Q* It will probably be more profitable to establish their own studio?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* And if also they open a training class to train people so that you and I may have our own training in photography, it will be more useful?

*A.* Yes, but it must not be on a central place alone. It must be provincial.

*Q.* You think provincial studios should be established; a central studio should not be established?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* But if the Government can afford it, there should be more than one studio? Bengal and Assam may have one?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* And Bengal and Bihar may have one? In that way three or four provinces may unite?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* One for Bombay and Calcutta? Or Madras and Bombay can collaborate?

*A.* No, the distances are too great.

*Q.* Well, a centre like Poona would not be too distant for Madras. Or Belgaum. Or Bangalore. Something of that sort. It could be easily arranged, provided finances are forthcoming. But the question is that you think the idea of having a government studio, one or more, in the country will be of definite advantage to the industry?

*Mr. Raval:* Yes, certainly. Because some of these studios can produce a lot of technical experts.

*Q.* At the same time, it will have attached to it, one of its adjuncts will be a training class to which students themselves may go in order to get training in photography, developing, printing, editing and all that.

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Do you think there is sufficient market for your productions now? We should like to have your considered opinion. Do you labour under any difficulties in exhibiting your pictures which you produce?

*A.* No, there is no difficulty.

*Q.* We have heard it said that a certain company has got a monopoly of theatres.

*A.* No, there is no such thing as monopoly.

*Q.* You don't suffer from any such thing?—in Bengal especially?

*A.* Not at all, throughout India.

*Q.* You had better speak for your own province.

*A.* That is true. But there is no monopoly.

*Q.* You don't think the industry suffers by the theatres being—more than a desirable number being in the hands of one agency?

*A.* No, there is no complaint about it.

*Q.* There is some complaint, but still you don't think it is a sound complaint?

*A.* No. There is no complaint as to monopoly.

*Q.* You don't suffer from that?

*A.* No, we don't suffer.

*Q.* Do you think that Indian films will have a market in England?

*Mr. Pillai:* If they are well produced.

*Q.* Suppose they are well produced. Do you think the subjects in which you deal will have an attraction for an English audience?

*A.* Yes. Certainly.

*Mr. Green:* It is only a question of improving the technique?

A. Yes.

Q. If you improve the technique you think the exhibitors will take them.

A. Yes, in the same way as they import American films. There has been an example in "The Light of Asia".

Chairman: Yes, I would like to know about that. You are connected with the production of "The Light of Asia"?

A. Not directly.

Q. Were you concerned with the exhibition of "The Light of Asia" in England? Were you there then?

A. No. But while it was being produced I was all along on the staff.

Q. Now you don't know anything about what happened to "The Light of Asia" in England or abroad?

A. I know. In Germany and in France, it had a very good run. But in England it was forced to run. It had what they technically call papering the house. It did not run on a gain but at a loss. But it did go for about three or four months. It was not a financial success, but it was an artistic success. Many intellectuals patronised it.

Q. But do you consider from the point of view of the former question I put to you, if the technique was good it would have a market in England? Do you consider the technique of "The Light of Asia" was fairly good.

A. Yes, it was fairly good.

Q. But is it your point that unless the technique is perfect Indian films will not have a market in England?

A. They expect their money's worth in technique.

Q. But although you consider "The Light of Asia" was fairly good in technique, it had not a market in England because of the want of direction. That is your point?

A. Yes.

Q. How long do you think it will take India to become perfect in technique?

A. You can buy pictures free, provided we have the facilities.

Q. What facilities?

A. Of having good studios.

Q. You think if you have money enough to get powerful lights and other things, you can at once rise to perfection?

A. Yes, I do.

Q. You think the people are qualified now?

A. Well, I am perfectly confident of them.

Q. How many people are there like that, and photographers who are qualified to produce films?

A. By that I don't mean that we could make a picture as good as the best American.

Q. That is what I wanted to know.

A. To a standard which will be accepted in Europe as an entertainer

Q. Very well. You mean the present cameramen and photographers and printers and developers now employed in the industry in Bombay?

A. I am not thinking of Bombay at all.

Q. In Bengal then. You think they are good enough to produce a standard of film which will be accepted in Europe?

A. I am talking of my own staff.

Q. You are talking of your own staff. You think you will be able to produce it?

A. Yes.

**Q.** That is very good. If one of you can do it, so much the better. Now, do you think there are sufficient theatres in the country?

**A.** I mean judging by the increased demand for Indian pictures that is a very fair index that theatres are very far behind in India.

**Q.** You want more theatres for the Indian industry to succeed?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Would you depend on India mainly or on foreign markets for the Indian industry to thrive?

**A.** Of course we have to be sure of the home market first before we think of the foreign market.

**Q.** And for the home market you want more theatres?

**A.** Yes. But the question of distribution I am not competent to deal with.

**Q.** Who is competent to deal with it? Do you think the market is sufficiently wide?

**Mr. Raval:** Of course comparing the cost of works here in India the market is quite sufficient.

**Q.** Can you depend on the existing number of theatres?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** How many films do you expect to produce, so far as the Indian industry is concerned. Don't think of yourself alone, but the whole industry. If you want to be organised and compete with the rest of the world.

**A.** We cannot think of competing with the rest of the world for some time to come.

**Q.** Very well. For supplying the home market, how many films?—say about 50 per cent. of the foreign films?

**A.** At least about 500 pictures a year.

**Q.** You want to produce 500 pictures a year throughout India?

**A.** We can manage with that.

**Q.** Have you estimated the cost of establishing a studio—a good studio here? What will be the cost? With all the modern equipments?

**A.** It may amount to anything from 50 to 80 thousand rupees, including the price of land, confining it only to educational films.

**Q.** Supposing you want to combine with it a certain amount of entertainment films?

**A.** Then you will have to treble the capital.

**Q.** That is a lakh and 50 thousand, you think.

**A.** Yes.

**Sir Haroon Jaffer:** Are your stories and scenarios censored beforehand?

**Mr. Raval:** No, they are not censored.

**Q.** Don't you think, in order to avoid loss, these things should be censored in advance?

**A.** It is not necessary.

**Q.** Suppose they are rejected? After the whole film is prepared, suppose it is rejected by the censor, the whole amount which you have put into it will be lost to you.

**A.** No. There are no such instances at all.

**Q.** Supposing there should be such instances.

**A.** Not to my knowledge.

They have of course been cutting a certain amount of film, but that does not mar the whole picture.

**Q.** Have you ever heard that the censors here rejected stories *in toto*?

**A.** Yes, some of the foreign films.

**Q.** Suppose they do it with Indian films, won't you lose money?

A. Yes.

Q. In that case you would prefer to have your stories censored beforehand?

A. But at present we have a fair idea of certain subjects which are likely to be censored or which would not be censored at all. And so if the scenario is censored before being produced, there would be a sort of disappointment in the market. It will make us less enthusiastic.

Q. But if there are some complaints about it? Do you know any of your friends going to America for this kind of training?

A. Yes, I know.

Q. Who are they?

A. Not exactly to America but to foreign countries, I mean England.

Q. We are told that there is a good deal of jealousy and they don't show their trade secrets to the students that go there. If such is the case, you would not advise students going to America or other places to learn this trade and would prefer that they should learn it in India?

A. Well, it all depends on these people, whether they would like to go.

Q. Well, those who have come back say there is a good deal of jealousy, and they don't show any trade secrets. That is what Mr. Deware who has just returned from America says. Would you still like the students to go abroad?

Mr. Pillai: There are no such things as trade secrets in America. Provided a man of good university training here goes there to learn he will be able to understand it. People there have no patience to teach the man every detail.

Q. Have you got any experience of America?

A. No, but I have of Germany, England and France.

Q. Then in Germany and England and France, there is no such thing as jealousy and trade secrets?

A. A little jealousy there may be but that should not hinder one from learning the work.

Q. They will teach you everything in Germany, England and France?

A. Yes.

Q. This "Shankaracharya" which was shown in the theatre is produced by you?

A. No, not by me, but by the second unit of the company. It is a branch of this company.

Q. Still, it is the same company?

A. Yes.

Q. How much were you given in this. What percentage was given to you out of this by Madans?

Mr. Raval: Well, we were given 36 per cent.

Q. And the remainder Madans have taken themselves?

A. Yes.

Q. How many shows have been just shown?

A. It has run for nearly six weeks and to calculate shows it may be about 14 every week—two shows a day.

Q. May I know the amount which has been realised every day?

A. The average amount will be about Rs. 250.

Q. How much have you got out of this production so far?

A. About Rs. 5,000, or Rs. 7,500.

Q. And it cost you about Rs. 35,000.

Chairman: They have got Rs. 7,000 up to now and they have spent about Rs. 30,000 on it.



*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* Still you have got to get Rs. 23,000. Do you think you will get Rs. 23,000 out of this?

*A.* Yes, provided it goes very well in the other provinces, in Bombay and Madras.

*Q.* How do you expect that they will go on very well in Bombay and Madras when the titles and captions are not in other languages?

*A.* We have made titles and captions in other languages—in Gujarati for Bombay. In Madras we have only English. They are capable of understanding English better.

*Chairman:* Everybody speaks English there.

*Mr. Raval:* That is my experience too, because I have been in Madras.

*Chairman:* Of course in the towns, not the villages.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* You have just heard about the Aurora producing company—and there are some other small producing companies here. Why don't you combine here and have a co-operative society or something like that?

*Mr. Raval:* Yes, we can do that.

*Q.* If you amalgamate, this capital difficulty will be solved. Why don't you do so?

*A.* We can do so.

*Q.* What is the use of having small companies like these and crying for capital.

Now as regards the photography of "Shankaracharya"—don't you think it will hurt the eyes of the children?

*Mr. Pillai:* It is the first attempt of the people.

*Q.* True, but won't it hurt the eyes of children?

*A.* Well, to some extent.

*Q.* Then shouldn't children be prohibited from going to see such films?

*A.* Well, that is too direct a question to ask.

*Q.* If it hurts their eyes, I think in the interests of the children they ought not to go.

*A.* Well, if you wish to take it in that way.

*Mr. Neogy:* Do you approve of the idea of a Government studio for the purpose of producing Government's own films and also for providing instruction to Indians? Anyhow, would such a studio be helpful to a private producer for the purpose of taking his pictures?

*Mr. Raval:* Such a studio would be suitable, but we have our provincial interests. It all depends where the studio is situated. If it is in Calcutta, it would no doubt be useful for the Calcutta people locally.

*Q.* Would you in that event be able to dispense with a studio of your own and depend entirely on the Government studio, which may be available to you only during the intervals of Government business?

*A.* Yes, provided there are enough facilities for our work.

*Q.* What do you mean by enough facilities? Do you expect to have complete control over the studio?

*A.* More or less.

*Q.* That is an essential condition?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* And time, I take it, is also essential. That is to say, you may not get the studio when you want it, but only when the Government are in a position to lend it to you.

*A.* No, it is essential that we should get it when we want it.

*Q.* So you must be sure of getting your studio whenever you want it?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* And it must be near to you? Those are the two conditions?

A. Yes.

Q. Now you (Mr. Pillai) said "The Light of Asia" was a success in France and Germany but not in England. The technique was not quite up to the mark and yet it proved a success in France and Germany, how do you account for that?

Mr. Pillai: In Germany they very much appreciate the Indian classics and so do the French, much more than English people.

Mr. Coatsman: Where do you sell your films?

A. We don't sell them, we hire them. The market is throughout India. There are about 200 permanent cinemas.

Q. You are able to sell your films in every province?

A. We send them on hire.

Q. It is the same thing. I take it your best market is Bengal?

A. No, our best market is Calcutta and Bombay. And Bombay is a better market than Calcutta.

Q. For what sort of film?

A. For Indian pictures.

Q. But what sort of subject?

A. Mostly mythology, if they are well produced.

Q. Well, now take the film we saw yesterday morning, "Incarnation". Will that sell well in Bombay?

A. Yes, that will go better in Bombay than Calcutta.

Mr. Green: They do not mind the Bengali dress in the first scene or two; Bombay won't mind that?

A. They won't mind. The Bombay public is not so critical.

Chairman: They are more cosmopolitan?

A. Yes.

Mr. Coatsman: After Calcutta and Bombay, what are the best markets?

A. Karachi, Allahabad, Rangoon, Madras, Bangalore.

Q. What about the Punjab?

A. In the Punjab we have a couple of stations, Lahore, Delhi, Amritsar.

Q. Have you exhibited there? Will you send them "Incarnation"?

A. Yes, we are going to send that.

Chairman: Do you exhibit foreign pictures also?

A. No, we have not been exhibiting foreign pictures.

Mr. Coatsman: And do you confine yourselves entirely to historical, mythological and more or less highbrow pictures like "Incarnation"?

Mr. Raval: We have not confined our attention to historical subjects. In fact, historical picture give a lot of trouble and are often banned. That is why we are very cautious in producing them.

Q. Now about your returns, how long a run have your films? Do they run for one year, two years?

A. Generally pictures run for about 2 years, but there are some pictures of distinguished success which have run for years together.

Q. How long does it take you to cover your outlay?

A. On an average about 1½ years to 2 years.

Q. That means to recoup the expenditure, plus a fair profit?

A. Yes.

Q. What do you consider a fair profit?

A. At present we consider Rs. 10,000 profit on a standard film fair

Colonel Crawford: What per cent. on the outlay, say 10 per cent.?

A. It may amount to 50 or 60 per cent.

Mr. Green: In the course of two years?

A. Yes.

Mr. Coatsman: I understand from a reply you gave to the Chairman that some big financier is backing your company. I suppose you get your capital back?

A. Yes, Sir. Then of course there will be no trouble.

Mr. Pillai: But we have to be very economic.

Mr. Coatsman: I noticed yesterday an arc-light at your place. How many have you got?

A. Two.

Q. But you cannot use them because you cannot get the current?

Mr. Pillai: No.

Q. Have you had an overrun on the bank? How much more money do you now invest in plant and equipment generally?

A. About 3 lakhs.

Colonel Crawford: I notice in your reply to the questionnaire you say the system of block and blind booking only exists in India to a very small extent but not in first run or key theatres. Would you explain that to me? Are you alluding to the Indian produced films generally?

Mr. Raval: Yes. Indian produced.

Q. Does that system exist in what you call Western theatres?

A. It may be so; I do not deal with that.

Q. That is, I take it, there are certain producing companies who insist upon the exhibitor taking the whole of their outturn whether they have seen it or not. You say it does exist to a small extent. I take it there are one or two Indian producing companies who can get exhibitors to enter into a contract with them to take all the pictures they produce.

A. Yes, of course there are one or two companies.

Q. You said when talking of the Bengali actors that the Bengali has not a film face.

A. They have not.

Q. What is it in their features, are they not sharp enough?

A. They are not generally pretty. I mean we do not get the right type of people as yet.

Q. So far as actresses are concerned?

A. Yes.

Mr. Jai Gopal: The trouble is we have to depend a lot upon the legitimate stage and the legitimate stage, in Bengal anyhow, is not of a very high standard. Naturally you cannot expect actresses of a very high standard; but for film acting, as far as my experience goes, you want a certain amount of intelligence in the actors and actresses, otherwise they cannot follow the director's requirements. And they must not only be amenable to instruction but also be quick at grasping things for themselves. Now in Bengal there are people of intelligence we have to admit.

Q. I was asking about a film face.

A. Film face even we have got here in the higher class but the higher class do not want to come to this industry on account of its connection with the stage; there is no connection actually but people think there is.

Q. I was enquiring about the film face. Does it mean that you must have a person with fairly well defined features?

A. Not so much a film face that we are concerned with as with certain types of face that we want for our different productions.

Q. You mentioned the possibilities of a European market and you said it was only a question of improved technique. Isn't it possible that you also have to consider the requirements of the mass audiences there and give them the type of sensational matter that they require?

A. Yes, no doubt.

Q. In dealing with films for America you will have to have the same stunts as you have in American films?

A. Yes.

Q. Now on the question of the Indian market, it does limit the amount of money you can spend. You cannot, for example, afford to spend a lakh of rupees.

A. No.

Q. Your limit is somewhere under Rs. 20,000.

A. It may go as far as Rs. 50,000 as the maximum.

Q. And with the present market if you want to produce bigger than that you have to be able to show outside India?

A. Yes.

Q. You say you have got enough finance. You find no difficulty in getting money?

A. No.

Mr. Green: One question more about the film face. From what I have seen,—such Bengali actors as I have seen, whether they have the right face or not, they can use that face better on the whole than the actors we saw in Bombay. I say this as a Bombay man. What is your trouble with the actor's face in Bengal? Does it not photograph well?

Mr. Jai Gopal: The male face is all right; the female face is the trouble.

Q. I gather you have no trouble with the censorship?

Mr. Raval: It is quite satisfactory.

Q. You are also very emphatic on the fact that you do not want censorship of scenarios. Is there anything to prevent you asking the Board whether anything is suitable for presentation or not. Would they object to advise?

A. There is no objection in doing this. But if we give the scenario to the Board, in such cases the scenario may leak out. That is our main objection.

**Oral Evidence of Mr. N. C. MITRA, Director, Mr. N. N. Bose, Production and Business Manager, Mr. N. M. BOSE, Photographer and Technician, of the Eastern Film Syndicate, on Friday, the 16th December 1927.**

Chairman: What is your name?

A. Naresh Chandra Mitra. I am the Director of the Eastern Film Syndicate. That is the name of the Company.

Q. But I thought it was Lakshmibilas.

A. That was a mistake. One of our partners is connected with the Lakshmibilas Hair Oil.

Q. How many of you form the syndicate?

A. Three of us.

Q. All of you are part proprietors?

A. Are partners in this concern. The others are Mr. S. C. Mitra and Mr. N. N. Bose.

Q. All of you have put money into the concern?

A. The money was advanced by S. C. Mitra. Therefore he is entitled to 8 annas profit, while the others get 4 annas each. The photographer is a paid man. Mr. Bose is the business manager.

Q. We saw some of your actors and actresses yesterday. Were they on the staff or taken for the job?

A. They were taken on. We have no permanent staff of actors or actresses.

Q. What about scenario writers?

A. I write the scenarios.

Q. You also direct?

A. I direct and I coach up the actors.

Q. What experience have you got of scenario writing?

A. I was in the theatrical line for 8 years. I was at one time dramatic director connected with the Minerva Theatre. I am also now employed in the Star Theatre. Also I am acting for Madan Theatres as a cinema artist, as a temporary man only for particular films.

Q. You write the story, you act and you also direct?

A. Yes. The business side is entirely managed by N. N. Bose and S. C. Mitra looks after the finances.

Q. When was the Syndicate formed?

A. Only in August last. Bose was formerly connected with the Taj Mahal Film Company which went into voluntary liquidation. That company also produced certain well known films which are now being shown by Madans. They (Madan's) bought over the concern.

Q. Why did it go into liquidation, was it not a paying concern?

A. No, Sir. On account of various reasons, the financial proprietor could not find money just at that moment. He was entangled in various share businesses such as jute share speculation; so when the jute share market came to slump he had to give certain dues and could not find finances for the company.

Q. And so the concern failed. How long was this Taj Mahal Company in existence?

A. It was run for about 3 years and it produced some very good films which were very very popular.

Q. Were those films shown outside Bengal, the films made by the Taj Mahal Company?

A. I believe some of them were shown in the U. P.

Q. Were they popular?

A. They were

Q. Are these Indian films popular in Calcutta?

A. Yes.

Q. Generally?

A. Almost in all cases, even when the film is not up to the up-to-date standard.

Q. You are just completing a film called "Devidasas" of which we saw two reels yesterday?

A. Yes.

Q. Are you well financed?

A. Whatever money we require we get from Mr. Mitra. There is no difficulty about finances.

Q. Are there any difficulties at all in the way of your going ahead?

A. The difficulty is that we have not got show houses and we have got to depend upon Madan for exhibiting our films.

Q. All the available show houses in Calcutta are in one hand?

A. Yes. There is only one, the Purna Theatre, which is not under the control of Madan's. The other theatre houses do not permit cinemas to be shown.

Q. What about the Globe? Why don't you show your films at the Globe?

A. I have not approached them.

**Q. Do they show Indian films?**

**A. Perhaps, but I don't know on what terms they show them. But I have heard they generally do not show because that theatre is visited by Europeans generally and Indians, even when they go there, do not go to see Bengali films or Indian films.**

**Q. You have not yet tried. When you were in the Taj Mahal Company did you find any difficulty about exhibiting films?**

**A. There was the same difficulty about houses.**

**Q. Even then the theatres were all in one hand?**

**A. At least in Calcutta. In Bengal there are other houses which are not owned by the Madan people. Then we have got to hire a house and show our films there.**

**Q. They don't take on a percentage basis?**

**A. They also take on a percentage basis.**

**Q. Then why don't you try?**

**A. We also send our films there.**

**Q. Why do you say that. You have not yet begun or tried, why do you say there is difficulty?**

**A. Because we experienced the difficulty in the Taj Mahal Company.**

**Q. All the theatres now in Calcutta were then in existence?**

**A. I think they were all owned by Madan. Except the Purna.**

**Q. All along there has been only one cinema show house which is outside Madan's?**

**A. Yes.**

**Q. Does not Madan show Indian pictures?**

**A. Yes.**

**Q. He does show pictures produced by other companies?**

**A. Yes.**

**Q. Then where is the difficulty?**

**A. The difficulty is that we have to submit to the terms they dictate.**

**Q. What terms did you get?**

**A. This time of course we are only going to Madan and they have offered us only 30 per cent., 70 per cent. being taken by themselves.**

**Q. What is the usual rate in Bombay?**

**A. I don't know.**

**Q. Do you think that is low?**

**A. Yes.**

**Q. Can you get better terms with the Purna people?**

**A. I believe we can get 50 per cent. from the Purna people.**

**Q. Did you get that at all?**

**A. Yes, when we were in the Taj Mahal Company.**

**Q. But Madan's, did they take any Taj Mahal pictures?**

**A. No, not at that time. They bought it outright when the company failed.**

**Q. Till then they did not show your pictures?**

**A. No, and we did not approach them because they wanted 70 per cent.**

**Q. Therefore you approached them but they wanted too much and offered you 30 per cent. Then why do you say you did not approach them? Do you go to Madan Theatre very often?**

**A. Yes, I am one of their artists.**

**Q. Do they show Indian films which are not produced by themselves?**

**A. Yes, occasionally. They are now showing "Shankaracharya".**

**Q.** That was after this Committee came into existence, but before that did they show any film produced in India, any Indian film?

**A.** I believe they showed Bombay films.

**Q.** You cannot say.

**A.** I cannot say, but my impression is they showed them.

**Q.** We don't want your impressions or opinions.

**A.** Well, I remember "Krishna Janma" was shown by them.

**Q.** Any way, that is one difficulty, the difficulty about exhibiting your films. Have you any other difficulty?

**A.** Difficulty in what sense?

**Q.** I don't know. It is for you to say. You are the man who is engaged in the trade.

**A.** There are difficulties about finance also, because the finance is being granted by only one man.

**Q.** What do you mean by difficulty about finance.

**A.** If I get more finance I can have my laboratory better equipped.

**Q.** You think it is a paying concern?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Then why does not your man, who is a financier, put more money into it?

**A.** Because he is a man new to the line. Even if he could advance the money he would be rather shy to put any more money.

**Q.** Produce one picture, try your luck, and then go ahead. What do you think this Committee or the Government can do for you in that way?

**A.** The Government can help us by opening institutions where we can coach up actors and actresses.

**Q.** You want facilities for training your men?

**A.** We want an institution of Government where they can train actors and actresses, where you can get technical knowledge with regard to photography and other things.

**Q.** You want the Government to establish a model studio.

**A.** The first thing necessary is this, that we must have people to train us.

**Q.** You want a studio with experts to train people. You want a Government studio with a training class as an adjunct where the experts employed in the studio will train outside students. That is your idea; you approve of that?

**A.** Yes, I approve of it. A (by another member of the company). I don't think that will be of any practical value. No country in the world.....

**Q.** Never mind any other country of the world. We are in a different country.

**Q.** Supposing there is a Government studio which produces films and they have got experts also who can train people in direction, in acting and other things—that will be part of the studio.

**Mr. Nithan Bose:** So far as photography and technique of production go, I think that will be of some value.

**Mr. Mitra:** With regard to direction and other things, it is a born art and with regard to Indian films the man must be well versed in Indian customs, etc.

**Q.** You all approve of the idea of Government establishing a studio preferably in Bengal?

**Mr. Mitra:** Or Bombay, in every province.

**Q.** So as to be easily accessible to the various provinces where they can produce their own educational and other films and train students for becoming experts in various ways. Do you think that is a good idea?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** The industry will be helped thereby?

**A.** To a great extent.

**Q.** That is your opinion after having experience in the line?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** You have not got a studio as yet?

**A.** No.

**Q.** What is the minimum capital you propose to put in this? Have you thought about it?

**Mr. Nagen Bose:** We have to spend about Rs. 20,000 in producing a film. For a small apparatus we have spent about Rs. 10,000.

**Q.** Where is your printing machine?

**A.** That is in our laboratory. We have spent about Rs. 10,000 on our accessories.

**Q.** Have any of you gone out of India?

**A.** None of us have any experience outside India.

**Q.** Are Bombay Indian made films shown in Calcutta?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Are they popular with the people here?

**Mr. Nithan Bose:** Not much. Not to the extent they are in Bombay.

**Q.** Do they attract a better house than western films?

**A.** No, because they are shown in theatres which can be ranked as second class.

**Q.** Where are the Bengal films shown?

**A.** In first class houses. In the Crown Cinema.

**Q.** Bombay films are not shown in the Crown at all?

**A.** No. They are shown in the Imperial Theatre, just in a narrow lane.

**Q.** Who controls the Imperial?

**A.** Madan.

**Q.** He brings Bombay films to be shown here?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** He does not show Bengal films in the theatre?

**A.** Yes, they make and show them.

**Q.** Do they show pictures made by others?

**A.** Yes. They are showing "Shankaracharya".

**Q.** Have they shown anything except "Shankaracharya"?

**A.** One by the Photo Play Syndicate, which was produced some 3 or 4 years ago in Calcutta.

**Q.** How many companies have become defunct now in Bengal?

**A.** The Taj Mahal, the Indo-British, the Photo Play Syndicate.

**Mr. Green:** Were any of these companies limited companies or were they owned by private partners?

**A.** Private partners.

**Chairman:** They failed not because the business was not a profitable one, but the partners would not agree, or there was want of proper management? It was more the fault of the men than the businesses themselves?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Have you got any other suggestion to make in order to develop the Indian film industry? If you have not thought about it, don't worry. We will leave it at that, that, you have no other suggestion to make.

**Mr. Nagen Bose:** We want Government to help us—you saw yesterday inside the train.....

**Q.** You mean facilities? Permits for seeing different places and easy access to places of interest?



*Mr. Mitra:* Yes.

*Mr. Green:* I am very interested in hearing that you, Mr. Mitra, are a graduate, that the photographer, Mr. Nithan Bose, is a graduate, and that Mr. Nagen Bose is an undergraduate, and if I may say so, I was struck with your acting, Mr. Mitra, and the results of your photography, Mr. Bose, that I saw yesterday.

*Mr. Mitra:* We are very thankful to you for saying so. That was a small part that I acted.

*Q.* I have often heard, though I do not know much about this side of India, that educated men find it difficult to get remunerative occupation in Calcutta except as low paid clerks.

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* If the production of films increases, you think there are many other educated gentlemen like yourselves that will go in either for the technical or the acting side?

*A.* Yes. That will be of great help to the educated classes.

*Q.* There will be no prejudice against this?

*A.* No.

*Q.* There was a suggestion that there are social difficulties—you are looked down upon if you are an actor?

*A.* It was formerly so, but people look at these things now in a different light.

*Q.* The prejudice is being overcome?

*A.* Yes, gradually.

*Mr. Nagen Bose:* Last night in the picture you saw the boys who were acting there were all my brothers' and other relations' children.

*A.* We got the boys from our own house.

*Q.* There is no difficulty on the female side?

*Mr. Mitra:* There is, but we have got to overcome it.

*Q.* Do you think you have a reasonable chance of so doing?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* It is a difficulty we are faced with all over India.

*A.* Formerly those that acted in theatres were not educated properly and consequently the result was they could not maintain their character up to the standard. Now-a-days when educated people are coming on the stage there is a reformation going on.

*Q.* You mean it is becoming a profession which anybody can join without any difficulty?

*Chairman:* And the people who join now are improving the atmosphere? The prostitute is redeemed by your profession?

*Mr. Mitra:* Not quite that.

*Q.* She is improving?

*A.* Yes.

*Mr. Nagen Bose:* Those girls who join the stage—you cannot call them prostitutes, as it is generally termed. They are more or less mistresses because they give more time to the stage than to the other side.

*Q.* So they are taken away from mischief?

*A.* Yes.

*Mr. Neogy:* This is considered to be a respectable profession for them?

*A.* Yes. These people belong to a better class than the women of the town.

*Mr. Green:* Do you think that the educated man makes a better actor?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* And is easier to direct?

*A.* Yes.

**Q.** I am asking you that question because I have seen a film in which an educated Indian gentleman gave a fine exhibition of acting. Can you tell us the approximate cost of producing the film which you showed us yesterday?

**A.** Very nearly Rs. 15,000.

**Q.** Not taking into account the cost of your studio, your cameras and so on?

**Mr. Nagen Bose:** It will cost us Rs. 15,000.

**Mr. Mitra:** This one which we showed you last night is the first copy which we cannot possibly show now. There is still further work on it.

**Q.** What will be the approximate cost of production of it?

**Mr. Nithan Bose:** It will come to about Rs. 15,000, and for that we will have three copies.

**Mr. Neogy:** What is the total footage?

**A.** 8,000, inclusive of titles and captions.

**Mr. Green:** As regards facilities have you had any occasion to apply to Government?

**Mr. Nagen Bose:** Up till now we have had no occasion to apply to Government for any concessions. For the film "Incarnation" we applied to the State of Jaipur for certain facilities, and they readily came forward with their help.

**Mr. Mitra:** In this connection I may say that Mr. Nithan Bose was formerly employed in the Indian Kinema Arts.

**Q.** Did you have to pay anything to the State?

**Mr. Nithan Bose:** No. It was an act of favour on their part.

**Mr. Coatsman:** Is it possible for you to say how the costs of any particular film are distributed? What I mean to say is, can you say what proportion of the cost is overhead, how much goes to wastage, how much goes to property, how much to marketing and so on? I would very much like to see the balance sheet of one film, showing the overhead charges too.

**Chairman:** They have not begun as yet. They are just beginning.

**Mr. Nagen Bose:** This is our first film. We have not yet calculated. We can give you a rough account.

**Q.** You own theatres of your own, or have you entered into any negotiations about that film?

**A.** No. Madans wanted to see the film and then they will fix up the percentage.

**Mr. Neogy:** Mr. Mitra, you are a distinguished actor and I want your opinion on one particular point. We have been told that there is a good deal of difference between stage acting and film acting.

**A.** Yes, I agree with regard to that.

**Q.** You generally draw upon stage actors for film acting here in Bengal?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** How do you find their acting for the film? Is it quite satisfactory?

**A.** Not satisfactory, we have got to coach them up anew for film acting.

**Q.** Having a natural aptitude for acting or, rather, having had a previous training in acting, it may be stage acting—do they find it easier to pick up film acting?

**A.** Certainly, much more easily than the ordinary novice whom we may recruit.

**Q.** So far as acting goes, the stage furnishes a sort of training ground?

**A.** Yes. Only the finish and chiselling up is required.

**Q.** Would you look to the Government studio which has been mentioned for giving any actual training for film acting to actors?

**A.** Yes, if he is an expert.

**Q.** But do you think a foreign expert would be in a position to train Indian people acting?

**A.** Not Indian acting, no.

**Q.** You would require Indian experts to train Indian actors in producing Indian films?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** That is essential?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Similarly, I take it, if we need experts for scenario writing, they also ought to be Indians?

**A.** Yes, because unless and until they know our manners, customs, modes of livelihood, they cannot possibly give us an accurate scenario.

**Q.** What about direction? Do you think you can get proper training in direction at the hands of a foreign expert?

**A.** So far as the technical portion is concerned.

**Q.** What is the technical portion of direction?

**A.** Photography and so forth.

**Q.** That is not direction? For instance, take your own case. Would you derive any great benefit from getting trained under a German expert?

**A.** He might suggest like this, "Stand like this, so that we can get good light on your face and record your expression more accurately".

*Chairman:* Facial expressions of actors?

**A.** Yes.

**Mr. Neogy:** But he must be in a position to enter into the spirit of the subject? Is he in a position to know what particular facial expression is needed at a particular moment?

**A.** No. He is not supposed to know. For that the expert requires knowledge of our local conditions and local feelings.

*Chairman:* Suppose you had a good director from Germany and an Indian director also—both of them to direct.....

**A.** That would be a jumble.

**Mr. Neogy:** You want undivided responsibility in direction?

**A.** Yes, so far as the Indian films are concerned.

**Q.** And for that purpose no foreign expert would be of any use?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Except for purely technical details, photographic details.

**Mr. Nithan Bose:** I was an amateur in photography in 1916 and I used to do cinematograph work in my grandfather's institute, that is Sir J. C. Bose's. Some of the plant photography there was done by me.

**Q.** You had your training there?

**A.** I was an amateur and I acquired practical experience there.

**Q.** Where did you learn motion photography? You learnt it under anybody's direction?

**A.** No. I learnt it myself.

**Mr. Green:** This is your first effort?

**A.** No. For this company this is the first.

**Q.** What other motion picture have you taken?

**A.** "Incarnation" was my first effort in the way of photography. I have taken educational pictures also.

**Mr. Neogy:** Now about the difficulty of exhibiting Indian pictures, do you not think that there is room for one or two more theatres in the northern part of Calcutta which could show Indian pictures exclusively.

**Mr. Mitra:** yes.

**Q.** But what is the difficulty in the way of such theatres springing up?

**A.** Because the capitalists are very shy.

**Mr. Nithan Bose:** The industry in Calcutta, for the matter of that, in Bengal, has a bad tradition. Two or three efforts were made for film production and they failed. Hence the capitalist is shy.

**Q.** I am not talking of film production, but so far as cinema theatres are concerned, they have been almost uniformly successful?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Then why is it that one or two more theatres are not put up by people not belonging to the Madans?

**Mr. Mitra:** That is because the capitalist is very shy.

**Q.** So, I think the remedy is partially in the hands of those people who are going in for production, because if you produce your films you ought to ensure their exhibition in theatres over which you have some control.

**Chairman:** If existing theatres show them there is no need for your putting up a theatre or theatres?

**A.** Even then they would demand a high percentage.

**Q.** You say there is no competition among cinema owners? You want more cinema houses in different hands, not in one's hands so that there may be competition between the cinema proprietors? That is what you want?

**A.** Yes.

**Mr. Neogy:** You said that the Madans generally offer 30 per cent. of the takings?

**A.** 30 to 35 per cent., or more than that.

**Q.** And you got about 50 per cent. from Purna?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Is the 30 to 35 per cent. of the takings of a first class theatre more or less than the 50 per cent. of a second class theatre? I am talking of the actual amount you get.

**A.** It comes to the same thing.

**Q.** Supposing Purna gives you 50 per cent. of the takings and the Madans give you 30 to 35 per cent., and the Madans admittedly own the first class theatres and Purna is a second class theatre—how much do you expect to get in actual amount? Does the actual amount vary?

**Mr. Nagen Bose:** Yes.

**Q.** Which is the greater?

**A.** The greater is the Madans'.

**Q.** You get more from the Madans although it may be 30 or 35 per cent. of the takings?

**Mr. Mitra:** Because they own several houses.

**Q.** So these percentage figures are rather misleading in a way?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** But so far as your pocket is concerned, you get much more out of the 30 per cent. of Madans than out of the 50 per cent. of Purna?

**A.** Yes.

**Mr. Khosla:** From Purna you cannot get outside Calcutta, whereas in the case of Madans you can get Calcutta, Bombay, Madras, etc.

**Q.** You get the advantage of their complete circuit and in that way you are compensated?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** The very fact that a picture has been shown by a first class theatre like the Madans gives a sort of advertisement to the picture which you can never get from exhibition anywhere else?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** The theatre proprietors are expected to advertise your films?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Do the Madans spend more in advertising than people like Purna?

**Mr. Mitra:** They do.

**Q.** That is also an advantage?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** So far as these advertisement charges are concerned, they come out of the share which they take?

**A.** Yes.

**Chairman:** Are you speaking from experience? You have not yet shown one picture.

**Mr. Neogy:** You are speaking only from general knowledge and not from personal experience?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Is it the opinion which you have derived as a result of the enquiries you have made in view of the fact that you are producing films now?

**A.** Yes.

**Sir Haroon Jaffer:** How many theatres are there in the Madans' circuit?

**A.** Not less than 60.

**Q.** And there are some associated theatres to the extent of about 25 or so. Do they show these pictures?

**Chairman:** They have not attempted yet.

**Mr. Nithan Bose:** We cannot give first hand information. But it all depends upon the picture.

**Mr. Nagen Bose:** They might show in 35 or 40 theatres.

**Mr. Khosla:** It all depends upon the quality of the film. If the film is very good they may show in the entire circuit.

**Q.** These are all generalisations. We want your experience only.

**Sir Haroon Jaffer:** To break this monopoly of the Madans should not better production and theatre building go hand in hand? Why did you not have your own theatre?

**Mr. Mitra:** That depends upon the capital.

**Q.** A small theatre won't cost much? About Rs. 5,000 or 6,000.

**Mr. Nagen Bose:** To build a cinema house you require Rs. 60,000.

**Q.** You would prefer if there is capital, that theatre building should go hand in hand with production in order to break this monopoly?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** About the film which you have mentioned, is it meant for the province of Bengal only?

**Mr. Nagen Bose:** We have depicted the social life of Bengal. Our intention is to show it in Bengal, and if a market is found, to send it to Madras, etc. We shall send it to Benares, Patna and other places where you have a decent number of Bengali settlers.

**Q.** Then you want to send it to other provinces also?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** What steps would you take to have these films appreciated in other provinces? What about the language?

**A.** We will have captions in English, in Hindi, or Gujerati, etc. We will have one copy specially for Bengal.

**Q.** You will have to make more copies, one for Bengal, one for Madras, one for Bombay and so on?

**A.** According to requirements. If they ask us to put in Hindi titles we will do so, and such like.

**Q.** After you take trouble to produce a picture, supposing it is rejected by the censors—would you prefer that the scenes or the scenarios should be examined or censored beforehand, before the film is produced, in order to save yourself loss and trouble?

*Mr. Nagen Bose:* We have got some idea of what sorts of things are rejected by the censor people. So we take the necessary precautions before we produce the pictures.

*Q.* Then there is no need for inspection?

*Mr. Mitra:* We do not generally run the risk of putting in things which might be rejected.

*Q.* You make your production on the raw films?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Do you want any kind of help in respect of this from Government? Do you want that they should come in from England or America with less duty?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Would it help you?

*Mr. Nithan Bose:* If they reduce it, that won't amount to much. It will come to Rs. 5 on a roll and that is not much.

*Mr. Green:* You mean it does not form a very high percentage of your total expenses on the production?

*A.* Yes.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* If the entertainment tax is removed, do you think you will get any benefit thereby? Or will it go to the exhibitors?

*Mr. Nagen Bose:* That is for the exhibitors to answer. We do not benefit at all.

*Q.* The industry would not benefit but the exhibitors will take the extra money? If more money comes in you will get more percentage?

*A.* If there is no entertainment tax we will get more money. We would prefer the tax to go. No doubt these small amounts collected together make the amount big.

*Q.* We are told that there is a greater demand for Indian films than what the companies could supply?

*Mr. Mitra:* That is a fact.

*Q.* How do you advertise these films? Do you advertise them in other provinces? Have you got any distributors in other provinces except Madans?

*Mr. Nagen Bose:* This is the first time that we are approaching Madans.

## **Written Statement of Mr. A. V. ROW, Sub-Agent, Universal Pictures Corporation of New York, U. S. A.**

### **INTRODUCTORY.**

1. I have been in this film trade as renter and exhibitor since the year 1913, and in this connection, I had to visit foreign countries as early as in 1914, in order to study the conditions of trade in those countries. I happened to be the first Indian to venture in this direction. I am now the Sub-Agent of the Universal Pictures Corporation (of New York) for India, Burma and Ceylon, and in this capacity have to travel all over these places from time to time, studying the conditions of film business.

### **GENERAL.**

2. (a) I should think that cinema shows are extremely popular both with the educated as well as the illiterate classes, as being the cheapest and yet the best form of amusement. Of course, during the last year or two, there has been no appreciable increase in the attendance at the cinemas but this is due to the general trade depression and consequent unemployment, etc., which make it impossible for the middle and poor classes to frequent cinemas as often as they would otherwise wish.

(b) The composition of the audience in a cinema depends, to a great extent, on the situation of the cinema and on the nature of films shown. For instance—

- (1) In the European quarters where only high class Western features are shown, the audience consists of European and educated Indians—with a majority of the former.
  - (2) In the Indian quarters, where high class Western features or Indian dramas adapted from popular novels or well-known historical subjects are screened, the audience will consist of both educated and illiterate classes—with a majority of the former; similarly, where Western serials, adventure films and comics or Indian dramas based on popular mythological themes are screened the audience will be mostly illiterate classes, with a sprinkling of the educated class.
- (c) I would not place it higher than 2 per cent.

## PART I.

### *Film Industry in India.*

3. I should think that the most popular films with the Indian audiences are those that could be easily understood and appreciated by them. For instance, to the cultured and educated Indians—the high class of Super features or social Western subjects, and adaptations from well-known literary and classical works of fiction; to the masses—foreign serials and films of the adventure type, comics, Indian mythological and religious subjects.

4. Yes, I should think they do—having regard to the present limitation in the production of suitable Indian films.

5. Not to the extent as desired.

(a) They are of a very amateurish and elementary standard as compared to the Western films.

(b) They are only popular with the masses who cannot understand and appreciate foreign films.

(c) Profits depend on the nature of the audience and on the quality of pictures shown. Generally, suitable Indian dramas with Indian actors and actresses bring in better business in the case of cinemas catering for Indian audiences.

6. (a) Yes, provided they are of a suitable standard.

(b) To the educated classes—social dramas based on popular novels and well-known historical subjects. To the illiterate classes—religious and mythological subjects, comics, thrilling pictures of the foreign serial type, etc.

7. No. In my experience, I have noticed that open air subjects or dramas with plenty of action, war dramas, comics, comedies, boxing films, etc., are very popular in the military stations. I may suggest here that the Government should provide suitable facilities for cinema shows for the benefit of Indian troops, who cannot afford to pay for such shows—the only recreation within their reach—out of their meagre salaries.

8. (a) The distribution and exhibition ends of the industry are fairly well organised, but there is considerable scope for improvement in the production department.

(b) The main difficulties besetting the industry are—lack of sufficient capital for carrying on the production on a large scale and of requisite skill and knowledge for producing films of a suitable standard. I would suggest the sending out of young, energetic and intelligent Indians, sufficiently interested in the trade, to foreign countries which are the centres of film production, to be properly trained in all the different branches of production, such as, photography, direction, scenario writing and setting, lighting, etc.—such training is only possible through the co-operation of the Governments

of respective countries. Each of these branches needs highly specialised training and should be studied separately by those who have a natural aptitude for these individual branches.

9. Not always. The reason is that the circulation of such films is quite limited—in most cases, only to the province in which they are produced, mainly due to differences in language, customs, manners and dresses, which make films depicting scenes, lives and character of one province difficult to be followed and appreciated in another—and consequently, producers are required to charge more hire in order to get back their investment with adequate profits—which the exhibitors sometimes find it hard to pay. Also, due to such differences and consequent uncertainty as to the success of such films, exhibitors too do not dare to book films produced in other than their own province—number of which films, however, is quite limited.

There is no monopoly as such, but a certain unit in Calcutta (Madan Theatres, Ltd.) financially strong and commandeering all the best foreign films, controls a majority of the cinemas, particularly in the key cities of India, Burma and Ceylon.

10. The "Block" booking system in India is non-existent, but "Blind" booking and "First run" systems are practised to some extent. I have not observed any special advantages or disadvantages of either of these systems, as the exhibitors, particularly in the key cities, are guided by the foreign trade journals, which give full information in regard to Western films.

11. Yes, especially in the key cities, but in the mofussil towns previewing is not always possible.

12. The Amusement Tax is undoubtedly a very great handicap,—especially in the present depressed state of the cinema business—to the exhibitor, as it affects his Box office receipts and to the public, as it is an additional tax on such a popular and innocent recreation as the cinema shows afford. Even in England, the Amusement Tax has been reduced and there is no reason why it should not be done so in a poor country like India.

13. The present heavy Customs tariff hits adversely both the exhibitors as well as the importers, inasmuch as the importers are required to enhance the film rentals proportionately and the exhibitors compelled to pay them. A reduction of the tariff would, therefore, benefit both the importers as well as the exhibitors. In this connection I may be permitted to observe that the duty on motor cars—use of which is confined only to the rich classes—has recently been reduced by 10 per cent. and so no special pleading would be necessary for reduction of the tariff on the Cinema films, which are the mainstay of entertaining the bulk of the population—the middle and poorer classes who cannot afford the luxury of motor cars. I am further of the opinion that the reduction is absolutely necessary in the case of extra prints of imported films, as it would help so much, particularly the small town exhibitors, who are in the majority in this country and who find it almost difficult to keep alive their business against high rentals they are required to pay, especially for the very costly foreign films of the Super class.

A reduction of the tariff on the raw material also would undoubtedly help the indigenous industry to some extent.

14. Yes, undoubtedly. A demand for such films could easily be created soon, even if it does not exist at the present moment. In fact, such films are very popular in foreign countries as being the best medium for imparting knowledge combined with pleasure, and it is my opinion that a compulsory introduction of the cinemas in schools and similar institutions would be highly beneficial both to the country and to the indigenous industry.

15. Certainly. India is so eminently rich in its resources of natural scenes and scenery, ideal climate, works of art and all other necessary amenities for the production of suitable films on a large scale.

16. Not at the present moment, but given all necessary facilities for a proper training, India could well produce suitable actors and actresses capable of bringing out films of real competitive exhibition value. My answer to question No. 8 offers suggestions in the matter.



17. Yes, if provided with suitable guarantees for the investments.

18. Yes, in the matter of finances, some Government support, either on co-operative lines or by means of subsidies, is absolutely necessary for the growth and development of the indigenous industry.

19. The cost of film production in this country compared to that of the Western countries is considerably cheaper, the reasons being, cheap talent and labour, ideal climate, suitable natural scenes, etc. It may be interesting to know that the average cost of a film at present produced in this country hardly approximates to half the average monthly salary of a popular star in America or England. Of course, I am not taking into account the salaries of such renowned stars as Charlie Chaplain, Harold Lloyd, Douglas Fairbanks, Mary Pickford, etc., which are fantastically high.

20. (a) Yes, to some extent, and such expenditure could well be justified from the results obtained.

(b) The Government could know best how to meet such expenditure from various other sources such as races, liquor, opium and such other vicious drugs, or, in the alternative, that a portion of the revenue derived from such sources should be utilised towards the growth and development of Indian film industry.

21. I am absolutely against any monopoly, in whatever form or by what ever agency. Once there is such a monopoly, there will be no competition and automatically all incentive to growth and progress of the industry would disappear.

22. I am not in favour of India's participation in the policy referred to as it will not benefit the Indian film industry in any way. It is extremely doubtful if Indian-made films, however well finished they may be in point of technique and all the rest of it, would appeal to the other parts of the Empire except as a matter of novelty or curiosity.

23. I should think that films would be the best medium for such a purpose.

24. (a)—(b) No.

(c) I am not aware of the public exhibition of any films being harmful to any particular class, as all films are properly censored prior to their exhibition.

(d) Yes.

(e) No.

25. Yes.

26. (a) Yes.

(b) No.

27. (a) None that I know of. It might be that certain films representing Western life are unintelligible to the uneducated Indians, but I do not believe that undesirable results follow the exhibition of such films. In fact, uneducated Indians do not care to see such films at all.

(b) I am not aware of any such films.

28. No.

29. Not necessary.

30. No. This question had better be left to the discretion of parents.

31. Yes.

32. The present system of censorship by the Boards is, on the whole, satisfactory but it is sometimes noticed that some of the Boards, and even the moffusil authorities, are at times unduly rigorous in proscribing certain scenes or portions of films—in rare cases, even entire films—duly certified by one of the other Boards as *suitable for public exhibition in India*. I suggest the formation of a Central Board in order to checkmate such arbitrary methods so ruinous to the interests of the trade.

33. (a), (b) and (c) Yes, certainly.

34. (a) No.

(b) I am strongly in favour of a Central Board, in addition to the Provincial Boards, to be formed as below :—

- (1) The Board should be situated at Bombay, which is the most important centre both for production and for importation of films.
- (2) The Board should be in the nature of an Appellate Board, having jurisdiction over the Provincial Boards and to be the sole arbiters in deciding upon films banned by the Provincial Boards.
- (3) The Board should be composed of, among others, three members representing the trade—one each from the importation, the production and the exhibition sides of the industry—out of which, only two to work on the Board as—

A. In the case of foreign films banned, one member each from the importation and exhibition sides.

B. In the case of Indian films banned, one member each from the production and exhibition sides.

(c) The Central Board should have jurisdiction over the Provincial Boards as suggested above, and to be the Central authority between the Provincial Boards and Central and Local Governments.

(d) The expenses will not be heavy and could easily be met out of the censorship fees derived by the Provincial Boards. I also believe that it would not be difficult to secure suitable and capable men to work on such a Board, in my opinion, with little or no remuneration.

35. (a) The present constitution of the Provincial Boards is far from satisfactory. I would suggest that there should be sufficient Indian representation on the Board—including one member from the trade itself.

(b) Yes.

36. The present system has been working satisfactorily. Film censoring officers must be well-educated and cultured, and free from bias or narrow-minded prejudice (by "well-educated" I do not mean those possessing University degrees but those who are well conversant with the trade combined with general commonsense and a tolerably good education).

37. (a) Yes.

(b) No.

38. "Lion's Claw".—Passed in Rangoon but banned in Bombay.

"Undine".—Passed in Madras but banned in Calcutta and Rangoon.

"Virgin of Stamboul".—Passed in Rangoon, banned in Calcutta.

"Triumph of the Rat".—Banned in Calcutta, but passed in Bombay.

39. No.

40. Not necessary, as these are usually brought to public notice only after the films which they are meant to advertise are duly censored. I have not noticed any such advertisement.

41. Yes, I think, since the establishment of Review Boards in America and England.

42. I have already suggested the inclusion of a member of the trade on the Board, in my answer No. 35 (a).

43. Not necessary, because censorship provides sufficient check over such films before they are publicly exhibited.

44. I should think that the public bodies and the Press, particularly the latter, would be a considerable force for maintaining a good standard of films, provided that they are prepared to co-operate with the trade.

45. Not necessary.

**Oral Evidence of Mr. A. V. ROW, Sub-Agent at Calcutta for the Universal Pictures Corporation of New York, U. S. A., on Friday, the 16th December 1927.**

*Chairman:* You are connected with the film trade from 1913?

A. Yes.

Q. As an exhibitor, or distributor, or both?

A. Exhibitor as well as distributor for about 6 years.

Q. You are now the sub-agent of the Universal Pictures Corporation?

A. Yes.

Q. For the last seven years?

A. Yes, more than that.

Q. You are in charge of what places?

A. India, Burma and Ceylon.

Q. You have experience of theatres all over India?

A. I should think so.

Q. Mr. Munim is the chief agent and you are his sub-agent?

A. Yes.

Q. You travel about much more than Mr. Munim?

A. Yes.

Q. You do all the touring?

A. Yes.

Q. Can you tell us in how many cinema shows in India do the Universal distribute their pictures?

A. About 80 or 85.

Q. Including Burma?

A. India, Burma and Ceylon.

Q. Altogether the Universal distributes their pictures to about 80 or 85 theatres. Through Local agents?

A. Distributed through the branches. Calcutta is looking after Bengal and Burma.

Q. How many theatres do you supply in Burma?

A. We had at one time more than 20, but now we have 7 or 8.

Q. Your supply is diminishing in Burma?

A. Yes.

Q. In India?

A. In India too when serials were popular we had a very large number of stations where we used to run our serials, but the popularity of the serial is diminishing now.

Q. What is replacing that?

A. Indian films.

Q. Serials were popular with the illiterate classes?

A. Yes.

Q. The illiterate classes favour serials much more than any other class of western pictures?

A. Yes.

Q. Next comes the comicals?

A. Yes.

Q. Do the illiterate classes favour these social dramas in western films?

A. No, not to that extent.

Q. Who favour social dramas mostly, where love-making scenes appear?

A. Mostly the educated classes.

Q. The educated Indian and European—it is they who want such films?

A. Yes.

Q. Not the illiterate classes?

A. They do not understand it.

Q. It is probably the student population and the Europeans who favour social dramas?

A. Yes.

Q. Do many students attend social dramas?

A. I do not think so. If I take the proportion I think these educated classes, the elderly persons, westernised Indians favour social dramas more, they follow the European in that respect.

Q. These fighting pictures where you see boxing matches and other things, football matches, and so on—who likes them?

A. Students.

Q. What about the illiterate classes? Do they take much interest in that?

A. They like adventurous and thrilling stories.

Q. Such as dropping down from mountains, they want more action than anything suggestive?

A. Yes.

Q. That is your experience throughout the country?

A. Yes.

Q. Can you tell me exactly what percentage of the films imported into this country bear upon social life, where drinking scenes and passionate love-making scenes appear? In what percentage of films do such scenes appear?

A. I cannot give you an exact percentage. I do not think it will be more than 10 to 15 per cent.

Q. 10 to 15 per cent. of the foreign films contain scenes of the underworld, passionate love-making, drinking, etc., scenes?

A. Yes.

Q. And you say such films are mostly seen by the European and westernised Indian?

A. Yes.

Q. And not by the illiterate classes?

A. No. In the first place they won't understand the theme of the story.

Q. And they are shown mostly in the fashionable theatres?

A. Yes. We call them first run theatres, in other words, high class theatres.

Q. They set the example for other theatres to follow?

A. Yes.

Q. These social dramas are first shown in the first run theatres?

A. High class theatres as we call them.

Q. How many high class theatres are there in India?

A. In places like Bombay, Calcutta, Rangoon, Madras, big towns.

Q. Some of the theatres in these places you call high class theatres?

A. Yes.

Mr. Green: Places like these you call key cities?

A. That is the American term.

Chairman: These presidency towns include Karachi and Rangoon. Bangalore perhaps is included?

A. Yes, Bangalore cantonment.

Q. And probably Secunderabad—do you consider it a high class theatre?

A. Yes.

Q. And Rawalpindi?

A. Yes.

Q. Lahore?

A. In all big towns.

Q. With a population of over 200,000?

A. 100,000 and above. It all depends upon the European population.

Q. In order to become a high class one it has to contain a fair proportion of European population?

A. In a place like that our films are in great demand. They are generally patronised by Europeans.

Q. Do you supply also the interior of the provinces, such films where passionate love-making scenes or drinking scenes appear. Take a place like Trichinopoly?

A. I know Trichinopoly. I know Madura.

Q. They are fairly big places. Do you take such social drama pictures to those places?

A. No, we have not got a good demand from those places. They might take them once in a way to fill gaps when there is no serial. They won't be able to pay for those pictures.

Q. So any mischief that is done by such class of pictures is done more in cities than in the outlying areas?

A. I cannot give you my opinion on this. I cannot tell you in the first place whether there is any mischief at all.

Q. Don't be afraid of that. May I know what percentage of the pictures are serials? You say that is diminishing, and that is due to the fact that Indian films are becoming more popular. Can you give us figures for the last three years to show the decline in the popularity of certain classes of films?

A. I can give you the figures now. From places like Calcutta, Bombay or Rangoon we used to get Rs. 250 as hire, but we cannot get now even Rs. 50, and simply we are losing.

Q. You mean that theatres which used to show serials now show Indian pictures? That is a deliberate impression which is now being made on the cinema industry in this country?

A. Yes.

Q. How many agencies are there for distributing foreign films in this country?

A. The Universal, Pathe and Madans.

Q. They also distribute and exhibit or they bring for their own exhibition?

A. They bring for their own exhibition and at the same time distribute.

Q. Do they distribute when their run is over, or even when they are exhibiting, do they distribute copies to others?

A. I cannot say. That all depends upon particular films.

Q. I want to know what is happening. If you know say so.

A. It is possible that.....

Q. Never mind possibilities, but do you know?

A. They must run in their own theatres first.

Q. What you know for a fact I want to know.

A. I do not know what arrangement they have got. I cannot tell you.

Q. Of the first class or high class theatres how many are owned by Madans?

A. Three in Calcutta.

Q. Do you include the Globe as a high class one?

A. Yes.

Q. Globe and the three Madans. What are the ones which you consider to be high class?

A. The Picture House, the Elphinstone Picture Palace, the Madan Theatre and Palace of Varieties and the Globe are the high class theatres.

Q. Do any of them exhibit Indian pictures?

A. No.

Q. The Globe never does?

A. No.

Q. How many of them really exhibit Indian pictures in this town?

A. Exclusively you mean.

Q. In addition to?

A. I think almost all the theatres in the Indian quarters, 8 or 9.

Q. Except these 4 all the rest you can say also show Indian pictures?

A. Yes.

Q. Can you tell me what are the Madan theatres in which they exhibit Indian films?

A. The Albion, the Empress, the Empire, the Kidderpore, the Ripon—I have not got the names.

Q. Do the Imperial show Indian films?

A. Yes.

Q. The Imperial is a theatre?

A. Yes, it is a cinema theatre.

Q. What Indian films do they show? Made by themselves?

A. No. Sometimes Bombay films too, and Calcutta make.

Q. Tell me the Calcutta films which they showed in their place.

A. "Krishna Kanta's Will" was shown in the Crown Theatre about 4 months ago.

Q. Apart from their own Indian productions?

A. It is their own.

Q. I want the productions of other companies which they showed in their theatre.

A. They showed "Sankaracharya" in the Albion Theatre.

Q. That is a very recent one. I want to know for the last 4 or 5 years now.

A. The Bombay film "Shivaji" was shown by them. It was produced at Kolhapur by the Maharashtra Company.

Q. There is a general complaint that Indian productions do not find sufficient facilities for exhibition because the good theatres are in the possession of Madans. They show naturally their own pictures and they do not show the productions of other companies. What do you say to that?

A. I think if they find it profitable, they run all.

Q. Do you think it is a well-founded complaint?

A. No, I do not think so.

Q. What fair proportion of the collections do you think should go to the producer of the picture, supposing it is a good picture?

A. At least 33 per cent.

Q. Do you know what proportion Indian producers get in Bombay where there is competition among theatres? Do you know the lowest they get is about 40 per cent.?

A. Yes, 40 to 45 per cent.

Q. There is more competition among theatre owners in Bombay than in Calcutta?

A. Yes.

Q. And therefore the Indian producers there are able to get 40 to 45 per cent.?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you know what they get here in Calcutta?

A. I have no idea.

Q. Do you think there is a tendency to improve the standard of films in recent years—in the imported films?

A. There is.

Q. Have you ever made suggestions yourself to improve the films which are produced by your company?

A. Not particularly.

Q. Don't you keep yourself in touch with the public, as to what they want and what they do not want as the sub-agent of your company? Do you not study the tastes of the people?

A. That, of course, we do from time to time.

Q. Do you yourself make a report?

A. Officially I do.

Q. Do you make suggestions as regards the things to be improved, the things to be avoided and so on?

A. If we see the film is against the interests of India or is likely to offend religion we at once point out.....

Q. Supposing an Indian is depicted in a bad colour you point out that such a film will not pay here?

A. Yes.

Q. Or if it is likely to injure the feelings of people, you point that out to your principals?

A. Yes.

Q. You have done so often?

A. Yes. Once or twice only.

Q. Did they improve on those suggestions?

A. 6 or 7 years ago we had a serial of the type.....

Q. I do not want details.

A. We had only one occasion to do so.

Q. And such things have stopped now?

A. Yes.

Q. Your suggestions are carried out?

A. I cannot say they are carried out, but we had no occasion to suggest again.

Q. You had no reason to complain on the same line? You had no occasion to repeat your complaint?

A. No.

Q. How many films in the year, not including copies, are imported in your agency? Of the same film you also get copies?

A. Yes.

Q. How many films in the year, excluding copies, do you import on an average?

A. 52 dramas, that is, social dramas, 52 comedies, 52 international news reels, and 6 serials.

Q. You know how many Madans import?

A. I do not know exactly.

Q. Do you know what Pathé imports? What you have mentioned are originals?

A. Yes.

Q. There may be one copy of each film imported?

A. Sometimes. It all depends upon the merits of the film, and popularity of the subject.

Q. As a matter of fact, have you had occasion to import more than one copy? In how many cases have you done that?

A. Generally we import two copies.

Q. Of every one of these things you get 2 copies?

A. Yes.

Q. Can you tell me how long after these films are exhibited in the country of origin, either in Europe or America, do you get them here in this country? The things which you import, are they all ones which have been exhibited either in America or in Europe?

A. No. We practically get them simultaneously as they are exhibited in America.

Q. You are able to show them about the same time as they show in America?

A. Yes.

Q. Have the exhibitors here an opportunity to know from the trade journals the nature of the film which they get?

A. Yes.

Q. Before the exhibitor books his order?

A. Yes.

Q. Journals like the one which you have given us come out to this country before the films come?

A. Yes, sometimes before they are released in America.

Q. Would that give me that information?

A. When the producers give a particular show, the representatives of the papers go there and give their own opinion about the merits of the film.

Q. So that the trade journals give you an account of it?

A. Yes.

Q. Is there such a thing as block booking in this country?

A. No.

Q. You have been in England? Did you interest yourself in this trade when you were in England?

A. Yes.

Q. You have been in America, in France and in Germany?

A. Yes.

Q. Can you tell us whether there is block booking there in England?

A. Yes, there is.

Q. What do you understand by that?

A. Supposing I am a producer, and scheduled to produce 52 features next year. I go to an exhibitor and tell him: I am going to produce so many. Well, if he books the whole lot, it is block booking.

Q. That is both blind and block booking. Whatever is block is blind and whatever is blind is block.

A. There is a slight difference between them. In the case of block booking I give the names of the films and in the case of blind booking I don't give the names.

Mr. Neogy: Do you give the titles or the substance of the story?

A. The titles and the featural stars. In blind booking they don't know who the actors will be.

Chairman: Does such a system exist at all in our country?



A. No. Here people, independent exhibitors, when they give an order know what they are getting.

*Mr. Neogy:* May I point out here that you say in your written statement that the blind booking system is practised to some extent?

A. Yes, I said it, but when I thought over this question and referred to the papers about America we have received, I found I was mistaken.

*Chairman:* You mean it does not exist?

A. No. We call it here practically advance booking. But they know what they are going to get, from the trade journals. Only they are obliged to buy wholesale.

Q. If they buy wholesale they have to pay less, but if they make a selection they pay a higher price. Just as you take a crop in a particular field instead of grading off. So also here if you don't grade them you get them cheaper; if you grade them you pay a higher price for the higher grade and a lower price for the lower.

A. Yes.

Q. Then people complain that there is block booking and blind booking. Especially the Anglo-Indian papers were very angry with us that we did not know anything about block booking and blind booking. Is it a fact that this is not in practice at all?

A. Yes.

Q. What do you do to suit the various provinces in giving captions in the vernacular? Do they not attract the people? Don't you find it useful in the trade?

A. That is what we are trying now.

Q. Do you do that after the film comes to this country or at the place of origin?

A. No, here in India.

Q. Do you find any difficulty in introducing captions in the films?

A. No, except for the extra expense.

Q. Whatever vernacular you want you can introduce easily?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you attend to the censoring of films yourself?

A. No.

Q. Who does it?

A. My assistants in Bombay.

Q. And in Calcutta?

A. Here also.

Q. Do you get your films censored here or in Bombay?

A. Sometimes here. But more often it is done in Bombay.

Q. Well, what are your experiences? Have you got any experience but this about censoring? Is there anything about which you think some steps should be taken to improve the conditions? There is nothing special that you have to complain about?

A. No.

Q. Have you appeared before the censoring board yourself at any time either here or in Bombay?

A. No.

Q. Then you have no direct experience of censoring work?

A. No.

Q. Now do British troops get what they want in places like Calcutta?

A. Yes.

Q. And Indian troops? What about Indian troops?

A. Well, that I have dealt with. They have no facilities of any kind to see cinema shows.

**Q.** But have the British troops got these facilities?

**A.** Yes, in every cantonment facilities are given, there are shows for the soldiers.

**Q.** You say wherever there are Indian troops stationed you want a cinema to be opened there in the same way as the British troops have, so that Indian pictures and others may be shown there.

**A.** Even then it is very doubtful because their pay is so low that they cannot afford to spend on this. But if Government can give some accommodation . . . .

**Q.** You want cinemas to be opened in these places?

**A.** Yes.

**Mr. Green:** When you say the Indian troops cannot pay for it, do I understand you to mean that the shows which the British troops see they do pay for? In the cantonment cinemas do these British soldiers pay to see the films?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** It is a commercial proposition. It is not supplied by a benign Government?

**Chairman:** But I believe facilities are provided for giving cinema shows and all that. Public houses are placed at the disposal of cinema companies.

**A.** In some cases, in Lucknow, they have got a Y. M. C. A. to show at concessional rates.

**Q.** In other places we were told public buildings were given to the cinema for British troops. You want similar facilities to be granted for Indian troops?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** And sometimes the contractors who supply provisions to the troops give facilities for cinema shows also.

**A.** That would be very convenient.

**Q.** You want such facilities to be given for Indian troops also?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Now, would you like Indian industries to flourish in this country?

**A.** Certainly. As an Indian I would.

**Q.** How would the supplying agencies like it? Supposing, for instance, a big American company buys up all Madans theatres. What will be the effect on the Indian industry?

**A.** It will come in the way of Indian exhibitors.

**Q.** You mean a monopoly in foreign hands not interested in the Indian industry would be detrimental to the growth of the Indian industry, whether it is British or American does not matter.

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** And unless the Indian exhibitor of foreign films is also a producer a monopoly in the hands of an Indian is also likely to injure the growth of the Indian industry. Supposing you are merely importing foreign films and exhibiting them and you had a monopoly of 200 theatres in the country. Of course you would be interested in exhibiting western films and not Indian films. You live by it. Of course, if you were producing your own films, you would combine the two. That is human nature. It is no blame to anybody. Anywhere in the world it would be the same. So that, I mean, if there is any chance of any such monopoly arising, you think in the public interest it ought to be prevented?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Do you think in the present state of the cinema market in this country there is such a monopoly in the hands of anyone?

**A.** I don't think so.

Q. There is no such monopoly of cinemas. You mean there is fair competition.

A. Yes, there is.

Q. But unfortunately in Calcutta city there is not that competition.

A. Because almost all the cinemas are owned by one unit.

Q. In other parts it is all right. In Rangoon how does it stand?

A. There are very few independent exhibitors.

Q. In Madras?

A. There too.

Q. In Bombay?

A. There too.

Q. In other places there is some competition but in Calcutta the competition is very little.

A. I think in Calcutta too there is competition.

Q. The Purna and the Globe. The Globe deals only in western pictures. Why does he not show Indian pictures?

A. I cannot say. It is left to their own sweet will.

Q. Do you think the tariff on the raw film connected with the industry is at all high and that it should be removed?

A. Well, I don't think it is a very high figure. Even then, it will help the industry to a very small extent.

Q. Because it does not make a very appreciable proportion of the cost of production. But you think we can increase the tariff on the imported films in order to encourage the growth of the Indian industry?

A. I don't think it will be possible.

Q. Do you think the trade will suffer?—that is what I want to know. Do you think the exhibitors are making a huge profit? Can you tell us how the theatres are working?

A. They are working at a very small, practically insignificant profit. Not as before.

Q. But has there not been a growth of cinema theatres in the last few years? Do you know the exact number in the whole of India?

A. 360 for the whole of India, Burma and Ceylon.

Q. And are they growing sufficiently rapidly? Don't you think more small cinemas are needed in the country?

A. As it is we have cinemas in small towns that are losing.

Q. Take places like Trichinopoly or Tanjore. How do the cinema owners thrive there?

A. No, they are losing heavily. That is what I have observed.

Q. Do you think the cinemas in district towns are not making a profit?

A. No.

Q. And what about the city cinemas?

A. The city cinemas some of them are doing good business, not all.

Q. But still you find the number growing. How do you account for it? It was only 200 about four years ago and it is 360 to-day.

A. That is due to competition.

Q. But competition will only step in if there is money in the business. Have many cinemas closed down? How cinemas have closed during the last three or four years?

A. Some have closed down temporarily, but they have reopened again.

Q. You don't know of any that have been permanently closed?

A. No.

Q. Isn't that a sure sign that it is not a losing concern, as you put it?

A. They are struggling along, hoping against hope.

**Q.** You think they carry on just struggling along, except a few?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** We want to know. Can you satisfy us by figures that the cinema proprietors are in such a position that they cannot bear any extra burden in the way of additional tax on imported films in order to encourage the growth of films in this country? Do you think it is possible for you to do that?

**A.** It will take some time.

**Q.** But you can send it, try and send it. We don't want to do anything injurious to the trade. At the same time to foster the Indian industry without doing any injustice to the foreigner. Now, have you got the figures to show that, without disclosing anything? We will keep it confidential, if you want.

**A.** There is nothing confidential in this and I can give it as far as I know.

**Q.** How is it you don't import educational films? There are so many educational films in Germany and America. How is it your agency or Madan's agency don't import them?

**A.** There is no demand. Otherwise we had imported these films.

**Q.** Why don't you show a certain length in your shows?

**A.** The cinema owners refuse to show. They don't want to show these things. Otherwise we had suitable films such as "Boy Scouts" and "Collegeians".

**Q.** Do you think people don't like that. Just as you show football, supposing you showed a good cholera film or malaria film, something showing how boys and girls are taught, how labourers work. All these things if you show, don't you think it will make part of the commercial shows?

**A.** We had these topical subjects, and others of educational value, they didn't take.

**Q.** You think it is a matter in which the Government alone should move. You cannot trust the trade to accept an educational film?

**A.** I cannot say, I don't trust. It is not profitable.

**Q.** I don't mean in any wrong sense, but you cannot depend upon them.

**A.** If the exhibitors find it profitable they will take it.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* Yours is an American-owned firm?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** What do you get—commission or pay?

**A.** Pay.

**Q.** What pay do you get?

*Mr. Green:* Is that necessary?

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* You handle the films of your own company and no one else's?

**A.** No.

**Q.** How many films are being produced in a year? What you have just mentioned—52 dramas, 52..... and 52..... That is what you said. Do they all come here?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** I mean all that they produce comes to India?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** As regards the Indian films, is there not a greater demand than supply for them?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** You have just mentioned about facilities given to the British troops and what facilities are given to Indian troops. Do you know that the Y. M. C. A. shows films to British troops only or to Indian troops also?

**A.** I didn't inquire. But I was in Lucknow for a few days and I only saw European soldiers.

**Q.** Admitted free?

**A.** No, for a nominal charge.

**Q.** Two annas?

**A.** I couldn't say.

**Q.** You didn't go into the cinema. There was no such film for Indian troops?

**A.** No.

**Q.** Have you experience of cantonments in India with regard to the exhibition of these films?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Take, for instance, Poona. Do you know anything about Poona?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** There is only one film theatre of Madans in the cantonment—and one in the civil lines.

**A.** No, there are two in the civil lines.

**Q.** There is one in the cantonment in Arsenal Road.

**A.** No, there are two, I think, in the cantonment. One is in Kirkee.

**Q.** I am speaking of the Poona cantonment itself?

**A.** I think there are two.

**Q.** Well, as far as I know there is only one. Do Madans pay a very high price to the cantonment boards to enable them to have the monopoly of the film theatres?

**A.** I have no idea about it.

**Q.** Is it also true that in the cantonments they depend on an audience of soldiers and therefore do not care to advertise much for the benefit of Indians?

**A.** Yes, it is a fact.

**Q.** As regards your question 8,—to send people to foreign countries for training, is it not a fact that there is a lot of jealousy there in America for the students coming from abroad, they don't show their trade secrets?

**A.** That is why I have said they should be sent in co-operation with the respective Governments.

**Q.** But the Governments cannot do anything with the trade people. Do you want to force them?

**A.** Well, if they can arrange facilities in co-operation.

**Q.** Don't you think it would be better to train them here in India with people brought from abroad?

**A.** Well, it is a question whether those experts would come to India on small salaries. There is a great demand for these experts in their own countries.

*Chairman:* We were told that German experts are cheap.

**A.** I have no idea about German experts.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* Wouldn't it be better to float a company here with English capital and an Indian directorate and Indian assistance. Would you like it?

**A.** Do you mean a Government concern?

**Q.** No, a British company. You know Sir Chimanlal Setalvad was thinking of starting a company. Would you like to have such a company started in India in order to assist the industry?

**A.** Well, if they mean to help the industry it is all right. But not as a monopoly.

**Q.** But it may break up Madans.

**A.** I don't think so.

*Chairman:* Is it necessary to break up Madans?

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* That I am asking just now. As regards your reply to No. 9, "the reason is that the circulation of such films is quite limited, in some cases only to the provinces in which they are produced." Why? How do you think you will be able to meet any difficulty there? Suppose you say they are made for the province in which they are produced. In case these films are utilised for other provinces, do you think that any language difficulty will come in the way?

A. That does not come in the way, because we can give translations in their own vernacular. I mean the customs, manners and so on.

Q. What do you do now with American films? What captions do you put on? Hindi? You just said you were making some Indian titles for some films.

A. We are just beginning to try.

Q. In what language?

A. In the Punjab we are trying with Urdu titles. In Bengal we are not trying. We are trying in Bombay with Gujarati titles. In Madras with Tamil and Telugu. In Burma we are not trying. So in different provinces we have different captions. If it becomes popular we might pursue it. Only one or two subjects. If we find they will be popular we might do it in other provinces too. But it is only possible in the case of spectacular productions.

Q. Have the exhibitors the opportunity to preview the films or see the particulars of the films from the journals? They don't preview. You also don't give them any opportunity?

A. Well, we have got the facilities, if they want to.

Q. If they ask. But you spontaneously don't do it. Sometimes you send mofussil exhibitors according to the orders given and sometimes send anything you yourself like.

A. Not anything. They have got contracts with us for a certain number of programmes in the year.

Q. And you send accordingly. Is it not just like block booking? You are then practising it yourself?

A. Not at all. We are sending them in advance a good amount of literature for our pictures.

Q. You are booking their orders for the whole year. You say that you are sending them according to what they order for the whole year. That is then blind booking.

A. But here in this case when we make the contract for a certain number of pictures we always give them the advertisements in advance.

Q. I suppose you get one or two pictures every week. They don't know what pictures they will get for the year? You yourself don't know what is coming.

A. We know.

Q. For the whole year? Does this not mean blind booking?

*Mr. Green:* Is it blind? I think he only admits to block.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* He says he does know for the whole year.

A. We get these advertisements in advance. We know the names.

Q. Then it is block booking.

A. No.

*Chairman:* Do you enter into a contract before the films are produced?

A. No.

Q. After the films are produced, you enter into a contract with your exhibitors here?

A. Yes.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* I think Madans were thinking of selling their concern to an American combine. Are they thinking of doing so still? I believe you have read this in the papers. Is the bargain completed?

A. I don't think so.

Q. Do you think it will come off?

A. I cannot say.

Q. You know more about Madans I think than anybody else. I think you ought to know.

Chairman: Why do you think he knows more about Madans than anybody else?

Sir Haroon Jaffer: Well, whatever you asked about Madans, he replied to. You don't know about the combine?

A. At least that discussion never took place here. When Mr. Jehangir went there he had some talk with the producers.

Q. You just mentioned that you supplied about 85 theatres with pictures yearly.

A. Yes.

Q. Well, how can you say that Madan's have a monopoly when you supply 85 cinemas yourself in the whole of India?

A. I never said monopoly in its true sense.

Q. Then what do you mean?

A. I call it a strong unit, financially very strong. That is the only concern in India to-day that is capable of buying all the best productions in America.

Q. So it will be to the interests of the Universal Pictures Corporation to see that this monopoly is removed?

A. Well, I cannot say. They are dealing with us also.

Q. How many theatres out of 85?

A. One or two we supply here and one or two in Bombay.

Q. How many films do you supply in all?

A. We supply a fairly good number.

Q. How many did you supply last month? Or shall we say how many did you supply during the last 16 days of this month?

A. I was not here last month, but on an average I think we supply about 2 in a month.

Q. Are these films purchased by them or are you renting them out?

A. We rent them out.

Q. We were told that there is a system of purchase and some of the exhibitors pay very high prices for them, is that so?

A. We never purchase pictures in India.

Q. That may be coming in the way of those who want to rent them?

A. Madans themselves have got a large number of theatres in India and they have to purchase them.

Q. And for that reason the producers don't supply their films to others?

A. I don't know about it, but we supply our pictures to Madans as well in addition to supplying them to others.

Q. My point was this, that the outside investor is discouraged or prevented from starting new concerns because he will have to purchase these films instead of renting them, and Madans will be standing in his way as they are purchasing the films?

A. I don't know if somebody has said that.

Chairman: You said that all the best producers have entered into an exclusive contract with Madans and therefore other exhibitors cannot get the films they want unless and until Madans have run through all their theatres. Is that so?

A. It is possible.

Q. Do you think that such a state of things does exist?

A. They have got exclusive contracts with a large number of producers in America.

Q. But are there other producers producing equally good films in America from whom the other exhibitors can buy?

A. Yes, there are so many other producers from whom the exhibitors can buy; Madans have not captured the whole of the market.

Q. Have they captured a considerable portion of the American market?

A. They are always after the best productions.

Q. I don't complain about it, but is it a fact that they are in possession of the majority of the best productions?

A. Yes. And they get the exclusive right also.

Q. So that you cannot get pictures if you are an exhibitor except through them?

A. No, we can't get them.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* We were told by the Commissioner of Police that the tendency to go to the cinemas is on the increase?

A. It is only during these winter months when there is a large influx of population from outside that the theatres are crowded. Perhaps he was talking of his experience in Calcutta.

Q. You mean the amusement tax does not affect the audience?

A. It does.

Q. And yet you say they come in large numbers?

A. As I told you, Calcutta is particularly busy in these winter months and there are any number of visitors here, and after the winter months are over, the attendance goes down to a considerable extent.

Q. To help the middle class would you abolish this tax totally or would you advocate its removal only for seats of one rupee or two rupees?

A. I would recommend its total abolition, because it will be useful both to the exhibitor as well as to the audience. That is done in other countries, and I don't see why it should be abolished here.

Q. If the entertainment tax is not removed altogether, I suppose you would advocate that the cinemas which will show Indian films should be free?

A. I would advocate the total abolition of the tax.

Q. Do you know how this tax is used in Calcutta?

A. I have no idea.

Q. I believe you are in favour of reducing the present heavy customs tariff?

A. Yes.

Q. I was going through the statement of your Chief Agent in Bombay, Mr. Chunilal Munim. Don't you agree with his view?

A. No. He said that as President of the Indian Producers' Association.

Q. He changed his opinion for that very purpose, I suppose?

A. I cannot say that. Of course, he has changed his view in the statement which he sent you afterwards.

*Chairman:* We have nothing to do with it now.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* When you return the films to America, do you get any rebate from the customs?

A. We don't get any rebate, but we have not yet tried it, because hitherto the Universal Company used to burn the old films instead of returning them, but now we have been instructed by our office to return the films, however rotten they may be. But we have not actually returned any films to America so far, and therefore we do not know how much rebate we can get from the customs authorities.

Q. That is allowed, and perhaps you won't forget it?

A. Thank you, we will see about it.



**Q.** How much do you charge for renting your pictures?

**A.** That will depend upon the merit of the picture as also the locality.

**Q.** Suppose you have a good picture, how much will you charge for it? Suppose you rent out one of your best social dramas or comedies to Madans. How much would you charge them?

**A.** Rs. 70 per reel, and if one drama is of ten reels, we will get Rs. 700. But, I may say, it will all depend upon the locality. For instance, if we charge this rate to Madans in Bombay and Calcutta, we are not able to get the same rates from other places in the mofussil.

**Q.** Now, all this money goes to America, does it not?

**A.** It is understood.

**Q.** You are very anxious for the Indian industry to prosper even if your masters have to lose?

**A.** I don't think I have mentioned that anywhere.

**Q.** But you would not like your masters to lose?

**A.** Certainly, I don't want them to lose; at the same time I don't want that the Indian industry should suffer in any way.

**Chairman:** It is rather a difficult question to answer for anybody.

**Sir Haroon Jaffer:** You have to pay the same duty on news reels. Do you think it should be reduced? Just as the Government of India gives concession to the press, do you think the duty on news reels should be reduced?

**A.** It would certainly be a good thing.

**Q.** Besides the reduction of duty on raw materials, I suppose you would also advocate the reduction of the tariff on machinery too which is required here for erecting studios? Now they charge about 15 per cent., and you would like a reduction of that duty?

**A.** Yes, it will help the producers.

**Q.** As regards educational films, would you like a condition to be inserted in the licence that educational films should be shown in every theatre?

**A.** Yes, because it will be useful to the school-going population and also to the uneducated people.

**Q.** It will also benefit the industry at the same time, will it not?

**A.** It will depend upon the nature of the film. If you show agricultural and other educational films by means of topicals, they will be useful, but they must form a very small proportion.

**Q.** Please see your answer to No. 18. You refer there to co-operative lines. What do you mean by that?

**A.** I mean producers should combine together on co-operative lines. I am told that the Government is giving loans in certain provinces under the State Aid to Industries Act for the development of indigenous industries, similarly the same facilities should be accorded to those interested in the cinema trade.

**Q.** On what security? Marawaris don't give money to producers here. How can you expect Government to give you money without security?

**A.** It will depend upon the status of the company.

**Q.** Referring to your answer to No. 20, what do you mean by saying "from the revenue received"? Do you mean that if there are more concerns there will be a larger revenue?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** If more studios are started here, it will stop the wealth going to America from this country?

**A.** How is it possible? I never said that. But the fundamental point for us to consider is whether India, circumstanced as she is, is capable of producing so many pictures required for this vast continent.

**Q.** When India is able to produce so many pictures, what would you say?

**A.** If the Indian pictures can compare favourably and they take on, then automatically the wealth going from this country that you speak of would stop.

**Q.** You have advocated that this expenditure should be got from races. Races are already taxed. Theatrical companies, I am told, are exempted from paying the amusement tax, and do you advocate that theatrical companies should also be taxed?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Would you like the censoring fees to be increased?

**A.** If it is with a view to award scholarships, I say yes.

**Q.** The present fee is Rs. 5 for a thousand feet for censoring a film?

**A.** As it is, it is exorbitant, and I am in favour of reducing it.

**Q.** How can we run the Central Board?

**A.** It is Government's look out.

**Q.** Now, the other Boards already levy a fee, do you think the Central Board should also levy a fee for re-examination?

**A.** No.

**Q.** Now, just as American producers have their agents here, are there any agents representing British film producers?

**A.** I don't know, but there are importers.

**Q.** But do you think it would be better if there are British film agents to compete with you?

**A.** It will all depend upon the merits of their productions. Let them come and compete, I won't mind it.

**Q.** Are British films shown in Calcutta?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** When they are shown, do they affect the box office receipts?

**A.** I think the exhibitors can answer that question better.

**Q.** Perhaps you know it and don't want to say so. You are a very experienced man. You have been to England and America. You know very much more as a sub-agent. You have travelled all over the world.

**A.** About six years ago I used to import some of these British productions, and it was difficult for me to invest money in them. I tried to import them. But now I have no idea, because, as an importer of American productions, I cannot handle any other make of films. I think it is better to put that question to any exhibitor here.

**Q.** Are the films which you import censored in America?

**A.** Yes, all the films that come out to this country have a trailer passed by a Review Board.

**Mr. Green:** Do you know who the Review Board is?

**A.** No.

**Sir Haroon Jaffer:** The Review Board reviews the pictures, does it not?

**A.** I am told that the Board is composed of so many members representing every branch of the industry.

**Q.** Are these certificates also seen by the censors here?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** There is some doubt expressed by some that films which are banned in America are dumped on India?

**A.** It is not a correct statement.

**Chairman:** What percentage of income for American films comes from India; i.e., how much do they get for films out of India?

**A.** I can't say unless I look up the figures.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* In reply to 24 (b) you say that all films are properly censored prior to their exhibition. If the objectionable parts are all removed, they won't be attractive?

A. The censors don't cut out portions to that extent. The censorship is quite all right now.

Q. Still there are complaints that pictures are not properly censored and there must be stricter censorship?

A. We cannot accept the opinion of one or two people.

Q. You are not in favour of certification of certain films as "for adults only"?

A. It may happen very rarely in case of what they call "advanced subjects".

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* You don't like the words "for adults", marked as such.

A. In the case of such films I think it will be advantageous to both.

Q. Advantageous to whom? The renters?

A. Renters, as well as the audience.

Q. Because more people will come expecting something extraordinary?

A. Yes.

Q. If it is advantageous, why do you say you don't like the certification of films to be marked for adults?

A. I do not advocate it. In such films there is much that one can learn. There are certain subjects called advanced subjects.

Q. You want young men to know that also?

A. I don't.

Q. In answer No. 29 you have said "No, it should not be marked for adults".

A. Why, I am asking you—that is all.

*Chairman:* It will attract undue notoriety?

A. Yes.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* But if it will attract notice then there will be more houses. It won't hurt you.

A. No.

Q. Do you want separate performances for children?

A. We are having it sometimes, whenever we have such special subjects as appeal to children only.

Q. Some rejected films are sent from here to America and brought back under new titles. Have you any such experience?

A. No, not in our case at least.

*Chairman:* I think the allegation was about Australia, not India.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* Such a thing has not happened in your experience?

A. No.

Q. Now supposing censorship takes place in the High Commissioner's Office, London, how will American films be affected thereby?

A. I have no idea, I cannot tell you that.

*Chairman:* If all censorship for India were to be done in England by the High Commissioner for India, how will your American companies like it?

A. I can't tell you.

Q. Instead of this Board you want an appellate board, that the central board should act in the nature of an appellate board?

A. Yes.

Q. Wouldn't you like this Board called a Central Development Board; instead of hearing appeals this Central Board can also develop the industry.

In addition to acting as an appellate authority it may also advise as to what steps should be taken to go on improving the Indian industry. Would you like that?

A. Yes.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* Have you heard of any practice that after certification the films are tampered with, new parts being added?

A. No.

Q. As regards posters, handbills and advertisements, these come with the films from America?

A. Yes.

Q. You say that these things ought not to be censored? That it is not necessary?

A. Yes.

Q. But some part of a film is censored and removed and it is found that still the advertisement shows those parts which have been removed?

A. That particular scene is never shown in the posters.

Q. Suppose that were done, do you advocate that there should be a censorship of such posters, handbills and advertisements? You mean the portion condemned or banned?

A. Yes.

Q. To our last question, No. 45, "Should some control be exercised by Government over film production?", you say "No". What would you do suppose undesirable films were made for private circulation or for export abroad or to Indian States? Don't you think it is a good thing that they should be registered and periodically inspected so that such mischief may be stopped?

A. If they want to produce such things, I do not think this will come in their way, the requirement of registration or licence.

Q. If there is no license, there is no authority to inspect? That is why they are encouraged, while in the other case if they do anything wrong they know they will be sent to jail.

A. But how can it be proved against them.

Q. The police can find out.

A. You mean in regard to contraband goods? If they want to do it, you cannot prevent them.

*Mr. Neogy:* You do not seem to be satisfied with the present constitution of the provincial censorship board. What is your idea about the size of the board and the proportion of Indian members on it? You say there should be sufficient Indian representation.

A. At least one or two members from the trade should be nominated to make it an absolutely representative board.

Q. That will satisfy you?

A. Yes.

Q. And they are to be Indians?

A. Yes.

Q. Then again in reply to No. 36 you say the present system has been working satisfactorily, that is to say, the system under which a paid officer examines the films and the Board hears any objection he may put forward. You are satisfied with that system, but at the same time you don't seem to be satisfied with the officers who do this work. Is it your experience that the present officers or inspectors do not satisfy your requirements about education and culture?

A. Very rarely; in some cases they do.

Q. Now, you have been all over the world and you are interested in the film industry. Have you ever tried to ascertain the possibilities of Indian films finding a market abroad?

A. No, except in the case of "The Light of Asia".

Q. How were you connected with that, in what way?

A. I am not connected with it.

Q. Have you any personal experience about that film?

A. No.

Mr. Green: You suggest that the duty on extra prints should be reduced?

A. Yes.

Q. How are the customs officers to know whether the particular print being imported is the first of that film or the second or the third?

A. We can show them the invoice of the first print on which they charged duty. All these invoices are initialled by them before they are satisfied.

Q. Has it occurred to you that the tariff valuation of 4 annas a foot already allows for the difference in value between one copy and various other copies? For instance, one of your feature films does not actually cost 4 annas a foot.

A. You mean the prints?

Q. No, the whole production. If the producer made only one copy it would not be 4 annas a foot; it might be 4 rupees or 4 pounds a foot?

A. I cannot give you the exact figure.

Q. Can you give me the name of one British film imported by you?

A. That depends upon the royalty they pay.

Q. Quite so. I am only asking you to justify the differentiation between the first copy imported and the second. They, of course, have the same value for exhibition purposes, have they not?

A. No, not for the second print.

Q. They are of the same intrinsic value?

A. It is only charged on the first copy, and if we want a second copy we get it for cost price and the printing cost.

Chairman: No, for exhibition every copy is equal to every other to the person who uses it because he sees the same thing?

A. Yes, of course.

Mr. Green: I am only asking you if there is any intrinsic difference between copy No. 1 and copy No. 2?

Chairman: Do you make any difference in renting the first copy and in renting the second copy?

A. No difference.

Mr. Green: Then why should there be any difference in the customs duty?

A. Well, the first copy we generally give to the big stations like Calcutta and Rangoon, and by the time these small exhibitors come to take them it is rendered unremunerable.

Chairman: What he means is the second copy does not fetch the same rent as the first.

Mr. Green: One other question on customs. Sir Haroon asked you if you had any rebate or drawback in duty when you sent back any film?

A. We have never claimed it up to now.

Q. Why do you send them back? Am I right in thinking because the raw material has a certain value?

A. By some chemical process they take silver out of it.

Q. Quite. The raw material has a certain value?

A. It is insignificant.

Q. Then why do you send it back?

A. To safeguard the Copyright Act.

Q. It is not for revenue purposes?

A. No.

*Chairman:* I want to know one thing. Is it a fact that the third and fourth rate films are sent into the interior, that you bring out a large number of cheap films for circulation in the interior, in small theatres? What I want to know is whether in the district parts you distribute films which you don't show in the cities in the first instance.

*A.* No, we don't do it.

*Q.* Are there different pictures shown in the interior to those shown in the presidency towns?

*A.* No.

*Q.* The same films are circulated throughout the country?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* You don't take advantage of the ignorance of the interior public to shove on to them all kinds of inferior films?

*A.* Never.

*Q.* Not by force or in any other way?

*A.* No, we don't do it.

*Q.* Do you know if anybody else does it?

*A.* I have no idea.

*Q.* Is it a fact that your American films are cheaper than British films to the Indian consumer?

*A.* I never import such films in these days and I have no idea of the comparison.

*Q.* Surely you know. It is an elementary fact of your trade. You ought to know whether as a matter of fact American films are cheaper than British films or cheaper than Indian films to the exhibitor?

*A.* It is quite possibly cheaper than Indian films.

*Q.* How is that so, although they cost more to produce in America and the Indian product costs less, how is it that the American film is cheaper in India than the Indian film?

*A.* Indian productions are only meant for the Indian market whereas America has a world market.

*Q.* They produce more copies?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* And they get their outturn from their own American market, so they are able to sell it cheaper here?

*A.* It is quite possible compared with Indian pictures, which are meant only for the Indian market.

*Q.* Having made their profit in their own country out of their production, this is only an extra market and they are able to sell their pictures cheaper here?

*A.* Yes.

**Written Statement of Mr. G. D. WALLER, Photographer, Calcutta,  
dated the 12th December 1927.**

On November 28th I received a copy of the questionnaire of the Cinematograph Committee and I have studied it carefully. I do not feel that I am in a position to answer the majority of questions and therefore I am restricting my reply to the few on which I feel I may express an opinion.

8. My cinema haunts are those patronised by Europeans in this city and it is seldom that films made in India are shown. These few are topical or in advertisement form and by their quality there is no doubt whatever that they were made in the country. Lately I have made it a point to visit two cinemas where Indian-made picture were showing. The first picture was "Incarnation" on view at the Albion Theatre. The attendance was meagre. I waited till the interval only and my comments are as follows:—

(1) There was too much reading matter.

- (2) Photography poor.
- (3) Badly printed and fogged in parts.
- (4) Acting poor.
- (5) Tears and scratches on the film.
- (6) Lighting bad and scenery not carefully selected.
- (7) The interest was such that I had no desire to see the film through.

The second play "Durgesh Nandini" was considerably better with some good clean photography. The weak points were in the close up pictures and some outdoor scenes which were under exposed. The house was crowded with Indians and the picture was much appreciated, but, to my mind, the story was disconnected. There was a limited choice of actors for the leading parts. I hardly think the picture would have a demand outside India.

13. The present Customs Tariff would hardly effect. To help the cinema industry I would suggest that unexposed film of standard size negative and positive be allowed into the country free of duty and that negative film exposed in India and sent abroad for printing be allowed in free with the positives made from it. (See reply to Question 23 below).

14. Yes. These films should be made by the Government and shown free at all cinemas in the country at not more than 1,000 feet per performance. The public will not pay to see such pictures nor will theatre managers pay for their hire.

15. Yes, there is a vast field in the country for the development of the industry. The outlook must be world-wide in competition with other cinema industries. Anything short of this policy is stagnation. You have in the country every kind of scenery imaginable and all it requires is experienced men to use this as a back ground for the thousand and one stories that have been written about the country.

16. From what I have seen. No. I would suggest importing trained men from England to work in conjunction with men in India who know the country; also good printers with up-to-date machinery as printing is the most difficult operation on the technical side of the industry. All developing and printing should be done in a dry temperature of about 65 degrees.

21. I am in agreement with the proposal until such time as the industry becomes a self-supporting one.

23. This is the first step in the development of the film industry. Cinema pictures of the country should be made recording its history, people, customs, etc., etc. These should be prepared methodically and distributed throughout the British Empire so that people in other parts of the great Commonwealth may know and learn something of the country and its people. This film, if seriously prepared, should cover many thousands of feet. It should be released in reels of about 1,000 feet at a time. It is such a film that I had intended to produce in instalments prior to the appointment of the Cinema Committee.

The scheme should be commenced immediately and the developed film sent abroad for printing until such time as the country is experienced enough to do its own. As already pointed out, the printing is the most difficult of the technical side of the industry and if duty-free importation to India of unexposed and positive printed Indian film could be legislated for it would at least help the industry in its early stages of development.

### **Supplementary Written Statement of Mr. G. D. WALLER, Photographer, dated the 16th December 1927.**

My point of view is that of a photographer—

#### *To start Industry.*

1. If considered from a worldwide point of view the industry should be commenced by Government of India.

2. A place of normal dry temperature should be selected for developing and printing and one of clear atmosphere where actinic values are good. (In the foot-hills for instance).

3. Artists in their particular job should be imported from England on a 3 or 5 years contract to build up the industry and incidentally teach the local men the fine points in the Industry.

#### *Recording the Country.*

For recording the country a central Government department could invite films (negative only) of the country from all interested and could thus make a collection to be distributed, after printing in England, throughout the Empire.

There is a man in Calcutta who knows the country extensively and who would be able to draw out a comprehensive programme. Cities, (Historical and Modern) Types, Religious festivals, Begging procession, Indian showmen, Cottage industries, Jute, Tea, etc., etc.

#### **Oral Evidence of Mr. G. D. WALLER, Photographer, on Friday, the 16th December 1927.**

*Chairman* : You are a citizen of Calcutta?

A. Yes, I have been resident here for some years.

Q. You generally go to the cinema?

A. About once or twice a week.

Q. And you go to those patronised by Europeans?

A. Yes.

Q. Which do you consider are those patronised by Europeans?

A. The Globe, the Elphinstone and Madans. And the Picture House too, but I very seldom go there.

Q. Now in these theatres you have not seen any Indian films?

A. No stories. I have seen topicals.

Q. Which you think very poor in quality? Did you make it a point to see whether Indian pictures were shown?

A. Just recently, within the last fortnight or three weeks.

Q. What was your idea in going to see these?

A. Well, to be able to pass an opinion on Indian work because I had not seen anything but topicals, and I thought I would see what an Indian picture was like.

Q. You have not seen any of the Bombay films? These are the only two films you have seen which you mention?

A. Yes.

Q. Notwithstanding their poor quality they attracted a large Indian crowd?

A. One of them did.

Q. Which was more or less of a religious nature.

A. Yes.

Q. The other one was a philosophical discussion?

A. Yes. And rather above the comprehension of the average person.

*Mr. Green* : " Durgesh Nandini " was a historical one, wasn't it?

*Chairman* : Yes, we saw that film. It attracted very large crowds, although it had been running for some time. When did you see it?

A. After it had been running for about five days. About a fortnight ago.

Q. We saw it later and it was also very crowded. Many people could not get admittance.



A. Oh yes, it was certainly crowded.

Q. Do you think it will be a paying concern to produce ordinary Indian films?

A. Yes, of the type of Nandini.

Q. Of course, it admits of great improvement in its technique?

A. Yes.

Q. What do you think should be done? There are several people already in the field both here and in Bombay. You cannot uproot it altogether and establish a new thing. How can we improve the existing concerns?

A. Well, my opinion is, I should first of all select a place where you have a clear atmosphere and where the actinic value of light is good. For instance somewhere in the foot hills. I believe Roorkee is a very suitable place. Photography in the hills and photography in the plains are two different things, because the light has no actinic values in the plains. And the result is—if I might refer to the picture again, you might have seen one of the heroes taken out for execution down an alley-way, that was obviously done in Calcutta. There was no actinic value in that. The shadows were dead black.

Mr. Green : Is that the reason why the whole film gave an impression of flatness? We were told in Bombay that there was no actinic value in the top lights for anything from half past twelve to 3 in the afternoon. That is the worst time for photography.

Chairman : But how would it assist this sort of production to put it in an out of the way place like that?

A. Of course my ideas are rather extensive. In my opinion, to do the cinema industry properly in India you want to be able to compete with the United States of America and Great Britain and Germany and so on. And to do that you have got to do it on a big scale, be prepared to spend money, and select proper places. The first thing is to select a place where the actinic values of light is good and the scenery satisfactory. Then you must have a dry temperature, preferably about 65 degrees, normal. Photography in India, in a place like Calcutta, is difficult, in the hot weather the conditions are appalling.

Q. Do you mean for the actors and producers or for the laboratory?

A. For laboratory work. You have got to try and harden your film and it gets nothing but a mass of jelly on the celluloid and the least touch will scratch it. I have had the experience of it washing right off the celluloid. And these are conditions which could be overcome in places where the climate is good and dry and at the same time the value of the light is good.

Q. So that producers may go to that spot?

A. Yes.

Q. Now, do you think in order to induce the producer to adopt such a course, that the Government should establish a model studio?

A. I think it would be a good idea if Government do it, to start the industry seriously. .

Q. And to produce the films which they want for themselves for education and propaganda purposes, and that will be an incentive for others to follow suit.

A. Yes, and at the same time the same studio could be subsequently handed over to private agencies. It wants somebody with good finance to start it.

Q. To start a good studio? You think you can also start a training class with experts there in order to train people who want to go into the industry?

A. I think that is necessary in order to encourage the growth of the industry. I should suggest some eminent men from England and make them collaborate with the people in India.

Q. I don't know if you are aware of it, but we were told that experts could be had in Germany cheaper than in England.

A. I don't know about that.

**Q.** Anyway that is a matter of detail. Experts from abroad should be brought for the purpose of photography. And what else?

**A.** For the whole production from start to finish.

**Q.** But of course you know an expert from abroad is not familiar with the conditions in this country as regards direction and acting and all that. He cannot enter into the spirit of the thing.

**A.** That is why I want him to collaborate with men who are in India and know the country thoroughly.

**Q.** The men should be guided from the artistic point of view?

**A.** You want the foreigner with the technique to say how the scenes should be set and so on, but the actual story to be produced in correct fashion should be controlled by the local people.

**Q.** Anyway you suggest a model studio should be established by Government?

**A.** I think so.

**Q.** Now, you suggest that for the present the negatives should be sent over for being printed and developed abroad?

**A.** Not for development but for printing.

**Q.** Why could you not send for the machinery here for the experts to do it?

**A.** I will tell you why. I don't know that there are many people in this country who know sufficiently about the printing. They know about the photography to a great extent but the printing is the most difficult part of the process. Now, I am talking as a photographer. For my own experience I did some photographs at home in 1924 and certain of these pictures I gave to professional shops to have enlarged for me. I brought those pictures out with me and I spent hours myself in trying to get equivalent results with the conveniences which the photographic society here had to offer and I simply could not get anything like their results.

**Q.** What do you think it is? Want of expert knowledge?

**A.** It is practice.

**Q.** Not merely climate?

**A.** No, I think climate has nothing to do with it. It is the knowledge that a certain picture might want 30 seconds of exposure. You might give 25 seconds, or you might give 28, you may still be wrong. And in developing that picture you have got to control certain parts. You have got to stop others and so on. That is on the technical side.

**Q.** But why should not the experts be sent for on short term contract so that they may do it here and show others how to do it? If there are no local conditions which affect proper printing, why should you not adopt the same course as you do in other lines, and bring men out here to do the work?

**A.** That is right. But I thought if there was any urgency for getting material quick that the printing should be done abroad. I was thinking more of the scheme I had in view of Empire propaganda. As a matter of fact, I had intended starting this propaganda myself about March and I intended to do India in instalments in order to try and record the country for exhibition abroad and for Empire purposes. Make India known. And for that purpose I suggested sending the films abroad for printing.

**Q.** Probably as a private enterprise you would prefer it?

**A.** It would be cheaper and better to do it.

**Mr. Green :** Conditions being what they are at present.

**Chairman :** But if you want to improve conditions, the better course would be to import an expert—for permanent results?

**A.** Oh yes, certainly. That suggestion was only for temporary results.

**Q.** And now what do you think it will cost to establish a studio like that?

**A.** That is a question which I cannot possibly answer. I read the other day that it cost £10,000 to produce one picture.

*Mr. Green :* We are thinking of the actual installation required in the studio, the cost of experts, and so on.

*Chairman :* Two experts, one in photography and the other in the printing line, and scenery matters, and a Director. Say with two or three experts, a studio with modern machinery and all that.

*A. :* I would rather not pass an opinion.

*Q. :* And you are looking forward apparently to select a suitable place so that it may become a producing centre?

*A. :* That is the idea.

*Q. :* So that when these better results are obtained, everybody will go there.

*A. :* Yes, it would become the Hollywood of India.

*Q. :* Do you think there is great scope for the future of the Indian industry if it is properly handled?

*A. :* I think there is world-wide scope.

*Q. :* And do you think we should allow time to elapse before the thing is taken up in this country?

*A. :* I should personally like to get on with it as soon as possible.

*Q. :* So that other people may not acquire vested interests in that sort of business, if the Indian industry is to prosper. You think it is up to us to take steps early to get hold of the market?

*A. :* Yes.

*Q. :* Because having regard to developments in other countries of the film industry, they may acquire the rights of certain subjects.

*A. :* Well, that has been done. I read about 18 months or 2 years ago that Mr. Rudyard Kipling had sold the rights to an American Company to produce *Kim* in India. I don't know what sort of a *Kim* an American Company would produce.

*Mr. Green :* I rather think that it was denied.

*A. :* I am not sure. I didn't see the denial.

*Chairman :* Well, you say the scheme should be commenced immediately. You think time is the essence of this matter?

*A. :* Yes.

*Mr. Green :* The technical faults that you observed in the Indian films that you have seen—you have given us a list of them—I take it a good many of them could be overcome with greater experience?

*A. :* Yes, certainly.

*Q. :* You say : photography poor, badly printed, fogged in parts, and so on. Well, all these could be overcome in India with proper training. Similar faults were obvious in the early days of the film industry in the west. They have been overcome and there is no inherent reason why they should not be overcome?

*A. :* No, there is no reason at all why they should not be overcome.

*Q. :* Turning to your suggestion for making films illustrating India for distribution through the Empire and presumably to other parts of the world, if you can get them on to the screen, were you in the suggestion in any way influenced by the recent legislation in England?

*A. :* No. I don't think I saw it. It was just from the point of view of a photographer.

*Q. :* Because you thought that there were great possibilities in it?

*A. :* I think it is an extensive thing. As a matter of fact, what really started it going was that I met a friend who told me a friend of his did a tour on the Nile and made a considerable amount of money by selling that film to a house in Germany. Subsequent to that he had done considerably more in making an income out of it. I didn't intend to make an income out of this but I intended to amuse myself and to meet expenses.

*Q. :* You will be quite content to pay your expenses?

*A. :* Yes.

**Q.** But are you aware of the general purport of the recent legislation in England?

**A.** You mean encouraging British productions? Well, just as much as the man in the street would know.

**Q.** I understand that legislation now makes it essential for every house to exhibit a certain proportion of British Empire films. That would include films made in India. I was only wondering whether you started this because of the fact that they would have to obtain a certain amount of British Empire films?

**A.** No, I didn't know of that.

**Chairman :** He started in March and that was in July.

**Mr. Green :** It has been in debate for a year or two. Only one other question. You told us a good deal about light in India. We have gathered from other witnesses that in America and in most parts of Empire artificial light is being used more and more, and that even in outdoor scenes the sun is supplemented by lorries with powerful generators and arc lights.

**A.** Oh! I know that studio work is practically all artificial light.

**Q.** Also that more and more work is being done in the studio?

**A.** Yes, they are doing as much as they possibly can, because they find that artificial light is considerably better.

**Q.** Don't they use artificial light very largely in order to make photography simpler for the camera man, for the photographer to regulate the light?

**A.** It would not affect the developer or the printer. Of course the negative would help considerably in the printing. At the same time technical knowledge is required to know exactly how much exposure to give that positive film to get the correct gradations in the picture.

**Mr. Coatsman :** Have you ever taken any moving pictures yourself?

**A.** No, I have not done any moving pictures myself.

**Q.** Have you travelled extensively in India?

**A.** Not very much. I have travelled up as far as Simla on the one hand and down to Colombo, across to Bombay and so on.

**Q.** Could you tell us whether there is any difference in the value of the light for photographic purposes between one part of India and another?

**A.** Yes, in the hills the light is ever so much better. It has more actinic value.

**Mr. Green :** It is not merely a question of freedom from dust?

**A.** I don't know what it is exactly.

**Mr. Coatsman :** But as an expert photographer you do think that there is difficulty.

**A.** Oh yes, and I think myself that Bengal is about the worst of the lot for light.

**Mr. Neogy :** You stated that there has been a slight improvement in the quality of the second picture?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Are you encouraged by this to hope that the quality may improve as experience is gathered by the people?

**A.** Yes, I think it would if it is properly handled. There is room for improvement.

**Q.** And supposing the people who have already been turning out these pictures were to be sent abroad for training would they not be able to improve their art?

**A.** Yes, I think they would be able to learn there but it would be a more satisfactory matter to bring somebody here to teach them.

**Q.** It would be more costly in any case.

**A.** The foreign experts are very averse to giving away their secrets.

**Q.** But would such people, whose services you could get, be worth having?

A. At a price. But what that price would be I cannot say.

Q. That might be prohibitive.

A. It might. Then the only thing is to carry on and try to improve ourselves.

Q. You would not go in for second-rate experts?

A. No, if you have a man you must have a first class man, because it is waste of money getting a second class man.

Q. Now I am referring to your scheme about British Empire publicity. You say that films should be distributed throughout the British Empire. Do you want the assistance of the different Governments for the purpose of this distribution or can you depend entirely upon the trade to take the necessary action?

A. I think it would help considerably to get the assistance of the British Government.

Q. And it might not be a commercial proposition to start with. Is that your view?

A. Yes, it may not be a commercial proposition.

Q. It is a sort of publicity that can succeed only with the assistance of the respective governments?

A. Yes, to start with.

Q. And then perhaps you would be in a position to say as to what the chances are for Indian films to go into the market abroad. It is a sort of feeler?

A. Yes, that is right.

**Written Statement of Mr. C. M. HUTCHINSON, C.I.E., Chief Scientific Adviser, Fertiliser Propaganda of India, dated the 15th December 1927.**

*Note on the use of the cinema for educational and propaganda purposes in India.*

I have no knowledge of the Cinematograph Industry as such beyond that acquired as a result of making cinema films of agricultural subjects for the Government of India during the last year of my service at Pusa in 1925-26.

My only interest in this subject is in connection with the utilization of the Cinema for educational and propaganda purposes and that only in dealing with the illiterate cultivating class. My experience with this class shows that they are able immediately to recognize and realize subjects presented as cinema films whereas even first class lantern slides of the same subjects frequently fail to secure recognition or understanding. This is entirely apart from the added interest provided by movement.

I am of opinion therefore that the cinema in India has a very great potentiality as an educative influence because of its appeal to the illiterate rural classes quite apart from its recognized value in dealing with the more educated urban audience. In the preparation of films for the illiterate audience it is important that these should be of indigenous manufacture so as to present subjects in familiar surroundings which can be immediately recognized.

For this reason I am of opinion that one of the first steps required for the development of the cinema industry in India as an educative influence is the establishment of a Central Bureau or Office with all the paraphernalia necessary for the production of indigenous films of the highest class.

Such a Bureau need not be a purely official Government office but might with advantage be managed by a Board of Control under Government patronage which would take the form of representation on the Board and of a subsidy designed to promote the welfare of the cinema industry and incidentally of the various Educational, Public Health and mercantile interests concerned.

The establishment of such a Central Bureau would be of the greatest value to many Indian industries, especially those dealing with Indian raw materials or the sale of imported goods; it would enable merchants and manufacturers who wished to make use of the cinema for propaganda purposes to obtain help and advice in the production of films, information as to their cost, and the best way of making use of them.

The Central Bureau would also be able to undertake the training of operators and showmen and might also maintain a permanent staff available for hire by Government or private firms and individuals. The Bureau would be in a position to make films of any subjects required either by Educational Institutions, Public Health Officers, Merchants or Manufacturers, and amongst other subjects would no doubt be employed in dealing with agricultural propaganda for which purpose the Cinema is eminently adapted.

It will be seen that the primary function of such a Central Bureau would be to promote and facilitate the use of the Cinema for educational and propaganda purposes and that it would have no direct connection with the cinema industry as a public entertainment enterprise. I am not in a position to form or express any opinion as to how far the establishment of such a Bureau would be likely to interfere with vested interests in the industry in India, but at the present moment there is a great and insistent need for the development of the use of the Cinema for educational and propaganda purposes which the establishment of such a Bureau would go far to encourage and facilitate.

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**Oral Evidence of Mr. C. M. HUTCHINSON, C.I.E., Chief Scientific Adviser, Fertiliser Propaganda of India, on Friday, the 16th December 1927.**

*Chairman:* We are glad you have come to give evidence. You were connected with the Pusa Institute for some years?

A. Yes.

Q. How many years were you there?

A. For 17½ years.

Q. Have you retired now from that?

A. Yes.

Q. You are now in some Fertiliser Propaganda Company?

A. Yes.

Q. You have produced agricultural films?

A. Yes.

Q. Is it of a scientific character or of a propaganda character?

A. Of a purely popular character. I showed the agricultural operations in the field.

Q. Did you produce them yourself?

A. Yes.

Q. You had your own camera and other things?

A. Yes. I did that myself.

Q. And the plot writing?

A. There was no plot writing, there was nothing of that sort. I did not go so far as that. What happened was this. The Government of India wanted films for propaganda purposes in connection with agriculture, and I was in charge of the photographic section at Pusa as part of my job. I was bacteriologist. They asked me to find whether one could get films of that sort made in India. I enquired in Calcutta and got some estimates, but the estimates were of the order of Rs. 2-8-0 a foot for making those films. The Government of India having only Rs. 5,000 to spend on that said that they could not do very much with that money. Then I suggested, "Let me spend the money

myself and I would see whether I could not produce the film at a lower rate at Pusa. I bought a camera, a printing machine and all the other outfit and made films myself. Of course, I had an Indian photographer in my laboratory, who did the developing and I did the printing myself because that is rather more tricky. We made about 13,000 feet of films in the course of the year and they have been exhibited all over India.

*Mr. Green :* 13,000 feet for Rs. 5,000?

*A. No.* I had to get another Rs. 1,500.

*Q. Altogether Rs. 6,500?*

*A. That included camera and printing machine.*

*Chairman :* What did the camera cost you?

*A. It cost Rs. 3,000, and I think I got the printing machine for Rs. 1,200.*

*Q. And the developing materials?*

*A. I did not include chemicals for development, because that was part of my ordinary equipment.*

*Q. You had to spend about Rs. 4,200 on the camera and the printing machine and it cost you about Rs. 2,300 to produce 13,000 feet?*

*A. I reckon that the average expenditure without overhead charges and depreciation on the apparatus was about between 3 to 4 annas a foot.*

*Q. If you had given the order to a private firm they would have charged for that work Rs. 2 to 2-8-0 a foot?*

*A. Rs. 2-8-0 was the lowest charge I got. Of course, that included everything. As a matter of fact, it would have been impossible to get those films made by a professional.*

*Q. Why?*

*A. For this reason. Supposing I want to photograph a man ploughing in the hot weather, I have got to do that at a certain time of the year and another operation has to be taken at another time of the year and so on. I understand the ordinary professional, the ones I talked to in Calcutta, would strongly object to any idea of that sort, of any one from Calcutta going to Bihar at 2-30 in the afternoon in the hot weather for the purpose of photographing a man ploughing the field.*

*Q. Unless you paid him heavily for that?*

*A. Yes. Besides they would not have done it. They told me it could not be done. They said at that time of the year they would not undertake to make films at all and I had very great trouble myself which I had to overcome.*

*Q. Were they Indians whom you thought of at that time?*

*A. The man in charge was a European, but I think the operators would have been Indian.*

*Q. But there are some Indian producers here. Do they care for the climate?*

*A. I do not suppose so. But the sort of thing that happened was this. You know how the film is taken up on the camera by a bobbin which is wound by a belt. In Bihar in the hot weather the film gets so dry owing to the hot weather that the spool does not wind properly. I lost a great many films in that way and for that reason I had to give up the first camera that I used and I got this Williamson Paragon camera which is much more expensive.*

*Q. But that climate difficulty any one will feel.*

*A. Yes. Apparently you will find that the production of films in India is going to be limited to a certain extent by the climatic difficulty.*

*Q. Unless you choose an ideal spot where you can work all through the year?*

*A. It is not so much a question of the development of the film,—that is another thing,—but the actual taking.*

*Q. Supposing Government were to produce propaganda films for agriculture, industries, public health,—for educational purposes, what is your advice, whether Government should establish their own studio or entrust such work to private agencies?*

A. My personal view is, if it is a purely Government affair there will be too much of redtapeism. My idea of the institute is one to which anybody can apply for information, for help and advice, and possibly for the making of films. Supposing a private firm applies to a central Government institution like that, they are not going to get their affair attended to before the Government department which is asking for the use of the same apparatus at the same time. So that there will always be trouble. Then I think it will be extremely difficult to be certain that funds allotted by Government for this specific purpose will always be available. You will have this trouble of the annual budget and lapse of allotted funds. You would not be able to get capital expenditure provided for in that way when we require it for a pioneer effort of that sort. You want large capital expenditure the amount of which you would not be able to predict until you knew what your requirements were. I think that will be an objection.

Q. Why do you think the Government would not be able to provide initial expenditure on a careful estimate, so much for establishing a studio? They can provide as they do in the case of the Railways for a programme of five years.

A. If they are prepared to do that, that is quite different—as long as they do not put it on the annual budget.

Q. In the Railways now you have got a thought out programme for five years. Some such thing would get rid of the difficulty which you have in mind?

A. One difficulty, but not the other one.

Q. Namely, of redtape?

A. Yes.

Q. We all complain about that.

A. You have not got to be in Government service to find out what redtape is. I am looking at it from the point of view of my present employment. You probably do not know about this fertiliser propaganda. You would see something about it in my evidence before the Royal Commission on Agriculture. My actual employers are the Imperial Chemical Industries in England. That is a very large combine with about £60 millions as capital. Their idea is to promote the use of fertilisers in Indian agriculture. There is no doubt at all that it would be a very good thing for Indian agriculture. We want to do that and the greatest difficulty in doing that is to get the conservative ryot to use something which has been proved to be profitable. As a first step towards that, we are running this fertiliser propaganda company which is a non-profit earning company and which is directed solely for the purpose of introducing the idea of the use of fertilisers in India. We are working in collaboration with the Agricultural Department officers all over India. And one of the ways in which we want to advance is by the use of the cinema. I told my employers, "I think the cinema is the most fertile method of changing the idea of the people. That is based on my own experience." I should like to tell you a particular case on which I based my opinion. One of the films that I made at Pusa was to illustrate the manufacture of Indigo. That was made on the spot in an indigo factory and it included all operations. There was a very large number of coolies employed in that. I got them on into this film and made it quite an interesting picture and a very good spectacular film. After that film was ready to be shown I got the manager of that factory to bring 250 of those coolies to Pusa, which is only about three miles away, to see that film. These people had never seen an electric light beforehand and they knew nothing whatever. The first thing I showed them was some lantern slide of the factory, the manager, the factory jamadar, some of the factory coolies and such like things. They did not know what they were.

Mr. Green: Photos of their own place?

A. Yes, and of their own people. Then I showed the cinema film. Immediately they jumped up in their places, showed great interest in the thing, they were shouting the names of the jamadar and of their other friends and so on. The changed impression produced in that way was so remarkable that I have



not forgotten it. That is the difference between a moving film and a lantern slide. They understood the moving film completely, the other way they did not understand anything at all. They did not know what it was.

*Chairman :* There was some little doubt cast upon the film for educational purposes in Lucknow.

*Mr. Green :* The gentleman said that he did not try them with the screen.

A. I was so struck with this that I showed some lantern slides—photographs of a cow. It was a Montgomery cow. They had not the slightest idea of what it was. I asked the jamadar to ask these people whether they could understand it. They did not know what it was.

*Chairman :* You think you can spread a great deal of knowledge among the illiterate people by using the cinema?

A. Yes.

*Q.* On various things which bear upon their daily life?

A. Yes. But the other point I think you would probably agree with me is important. You must not show them something different which they cannot recognise at once.

*Q.* You mean you must reproduce local conditions?

A. Yes, and local costumes.

*Q.* Supposing, for example, for showing an agricultural improvement, you introduce a Madrassi labourer ploughing the field with an improved plough, or something of that sort. . . .

A. I do not think that will be so bad as that. What I am aiming at is this. I have seen American agricultural films shown in India where you had white men doing labour which in India would be done by a coolie. That they could not understand at all. What I mean is this. This particular film that I saw was shown by one of the railways on the other side of India, I think it was the G. I. P. Ry., a representative of this railway came over to Pusa to see my films because the Railway wanted to see what could be done by means of films for propaganda purposes. He brought with him an American film intended for propaganda for the use of nitrate of soda. When it was shown on the film the people thought that it was only a white man who could use it on the field,—that is the sort of idea that was conveyed by that, that it is a thing which could be done on the field only by a white man.

*Q.* It would make a difference between province and province in India?

A. Yes, if you wanted to reach the agriculturist.

*Q.* It would be reduplicating a lot of work to introduce provincial peculiarities in each case?

A. I would not show a Punjabi in Bengal, I might show a Madrassi in Bengal. Supposing you had a Madrassi ploughing the field, it would not be so bad as the Punjabi doing it.

*Q.* It requires careful selection?

A. Not so very careful.

*Q.* You want a certain amount of attention in order to give it a local flavour?

A. Yes. I would not cut out the use of all-India films altogether.

*Q.* For instance, in some of the departments which I mentioned, you may produce all-India films instead of each province producing its own films? Do you think so?

A. Yes.

*Q.* Coming back to the point at which I left you, you said that a Government agency purely as such is not of much value. Then what should be done?

A. You mean a central office?

*Q.* Central office or local office.

A. I thought of an office which would not only be subsidised by other agencies outside Government, but on the strength of that subsidy would be managed by a board or committee on which you would have full representation of all the people who were interested in the use of the cinema in India. I am

thinking of course merely from the point of view of the cinema as an educational factor, not from the entertainment point of view. The public health men, the educational men, the agricultural men will all have an interest in this. The agricultural men will include men who are going to deal in agricultural implements and fertilisers and they will want representation on the board of control of this studio so that they should carry weight when it comes to a question of either training men for doing this particular work or actually making the film.

*Q.* You advocate apparently a private agency subsidised by Government?

*A.* You know the Medical Research Association. That is not run by the Government of India but by a board or association which is subsidised by the Government of India and I was thinking of a similar method for this.

*Q.* In which all the departments will have a voice and the public interests will have a voice?

*A.* Yes. It is a thing which will have to be carefully worked out to get the best results. But I think the principle should be that everybody's interest should have some say in the management.

*Q.* Don't you think it will lead to some complications in a country like this where you have conflicting interests?

*A.* Why should interests be conflicting?

*Q.* Supposing, for instance, where there is competition between your fertiliser company and some other company which wants to popularise some other fertiliser?

*A.* I do not think that should be a serious objection.

*Q.* And also politics might intervene?

*A.* Of course, politics may intervene in the best scheme that you may devise, but you will have to ignore them as far as possible. I do not think politics will intervene seriously, especially when it is a question of education, public health or agriculture. All politicians are agreed on that, is it not?

*Q.* For instance, if it is a question of reproducing history.

*A.* I know, then you want a very politic director.

*Q.* Anyway, those are difficulties which will have to be faced?

*A.* Yes, and I do not think they are so great that you should abandon the idea.

*Q.* You want an agency subsidised by Government in which all interests are represented, on the model of the Medical Research Association? You have not thought out the scheme, nor have we done so. But that is the principle that should be kept in view?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Don't you think that we should take up the spread of knowledge among people as early as possible?

*A.* I think it is of the most urgent importance.

*Q.* Would you give it a first claim upon the financial resources of Government—to spend money in this direction?

*A.* Certainly.

*Mr. Green :* You prefer to run your central bureau as an association of the nature you have pointed out rather than to have a purely public body? I mean you want a purely commercial body with possibly Government directors?

*A.* It will depend very largely on what the Government director's function is.

*Q.* I was contemplating the possibility of a commercial company with a bilateral guarantee with and to Government, the Government to guarantee to order a certain footage per year, the company to guarantee to supply certain footage per year, with a Government director whose duty was to see that the Government's business got due attention.

*A.* And then Government will postulate a certain amount of control both on the finances and the output?

**Q.** Not so much control. The director will hold a watching brief on behalf of Government.

**A.** Again I am looking at it from the educational point of view more than from any other point of view. To my mind the most important function of this bureau is to provide information to people who want the use of the cinema for propaganda purposes, as to the best way of doing it, how it could be done, and if possible, to provide them with the films they require. Take my own people for the moment. We do not know how to get films made. We do not know where to go or how to get films made for our particular purpose.

**Q.** I was particularly interested in the figures you gave us, that when you approached commercial bodies to produce films for you, they wanted not less than Rs. 2½ a foot, whereas disregarding overhead charges you could produce them at 3 annas a foot.

**A.** Somewhere between 3 and 4 annas a foot.

**Q.** Even if it be a rupee a foot the difference would still be striking?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Did you try to reason out what was the cause of this extraordinary divergence?

**A.** Yes. It was not worth while for them to do it.

**Q.** In other words they could produce films of their own and get a better return?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** I ask you that question because we have it in evidence, that at any rate in Bombay Indian companies, of which there are a number, cannot turn out Indian films fast enough to meet the demand. Obviously therefore they would not produce films for any other agency unless they got a very handsome profit on it?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** That is why you want some other non-commercial agency which will undertake definitely to produce films at a reasonable cost?

**A.** Yes.

**Mr. Coatsman:** Do you contemplate this agency acting simply for the Government of India or for the Government of India plus all the provincial Governments?

**A.** One of the reasons why I preferred it to be a board and not labelled "Government of India" was that one's recent experience of the development of provincial autonomy is that anything labelled Government of India does not go down in the provinces as well as it used to. That was my own experience as a Government of India servant at Pusa. I was there from 1899 to 1924. In the early days as a member of the Pusa staff one was welcomed and one's opinions received by the provincial department anywhere but as a result of provincial autonomy the Government of India is not so well received.

**Q.** I was thinking of the actual film producing agency. I am not sure whether we are thinking of the same thing.

**A.** No, I was thinking of the intercourse between the Central Government and the provinces.

**Q.** You want that agency run not by Government but by non-officials, Government merely subsidising it?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** What sort of subsidy do you imagine ought to be given?

**A.** As to that I should not like to say anything, knowing nothing at all about the film industry. I do not know what capital expenditure is required.

**Q.** What sort of conditions would you like it to be given on?

**A.** I should say the fairest method, I do not say the actual condition, would be, for the provinces to be asked whether they would care to subscribe and if they put up the amount which they could conveniently spare the Government of India could add a sort of *pro rata* contribution.

*Mr. Neogy*: In connection with your films, you have personal experience of one producing agency. Could you give us the name of that firm?

*A.* I am afraid I cannot remember it. It was a firm in Calcutta run by one man. It was one of these large photographic firms.

*Q.* Are they engaged in producing films for the trade?

*A.* Oh yes. This man was a specialist in the production of films and he gave me to understand that the reason why he wanted to charge such a high rate was that he had already engagements all over India for doing the same work at that rate. In fact, when I approached him he said he could not do any of this work for 3 months because he was going to Madras to work under those terms for someone—I don't know what concern it was down there.

*Q.* Could it have been the Railway Publicity Department?

*A.* I don't know. He did not tell me and I did not enquire.

*Q.* You did not call for tenders on that occasion?

*A.* No, I wrote to, I think, about half a dozen firms in Calcutta. I did not go outside Calcutta.

*Q.* And all were equally disappointing?

*A.* They did not all quote a figure. Most of them said they would not do it and in fact the first arrangement that I made or tried to make was making films for myself. I was very much afraid of the developing and the printing of these films which is a very big undertaking for anybody. I tried to get a firm in Calcutta to undertake to develop my films and print them for me. At first they agreed to do it but later on before they had actually done anything for me they withdrew and said it was not worth their while, that they would have to charge me such a high rate for it that it would not be worth anybody's while to do it.

## **Written Statement of Miss CORNELIA SORABJI, Honorary General Secretary, The Federation of University Women in India.**

### **GENERAL.**

2. (a) (1) Educated Indians, both men and women, frequent Cinemas in large numbers: but more men than women are on an average to be seen at any show.

(2) Illiterate men and boys also go in large numbers. In relation to general statistics (population) the proportion of the educated is however greater than of the uneducated.

(b) As to the composition of an average Cinema audience, in our opinion this differs according to the locality, and to the character of the films.

*In South Calcutta* the Eurasian element predominates: Indians come next: then Europeans.

*In North Calcutta* the audiences are practically all Indian. For films of well-known books or the lives of historical personages, European booking, and booking representative of the educated Indian communities and the student class would seem to show an increase.

(c) Speaking from observation and without examination of any statistics available in the records of exhibitors—the attendance of children under 14, in our opinion, varies according to the time of year, and the day of the week. During the holidays—Poojas, Xmas, etc., the attendance of children increases, and they would seem to be taken indiscriminately to any film at the hour at which their parents and guardians are free to take or send them. Saturday and Sunday films throughout the year, and the late films on Friday show a larger proportion of children than on other days. This increase would seem to come largely from the shop (keepers and servers) and clerical (clerks in Government and Merchant offices) communities of all races.

For sensational films the cheap seats of theatres seem to be packed with Indian boys of impressionable age.

## PART I.

3. Indian audiences seem to like a *long film* whatever the subject: and for choice of subject a well-known book, particularly a novel. Detective or crook tales, and sport, would seem on the whole to be not as popular with Indian as with English audiences.

4. If "adequacy" means drawing crowds, it would seem that Exhibitors are catering adequately for Indian audiences. But in our opinion wrong impressions are in many cases being given generally in India.

5. Very few films depicting Indian life would seem to be available to Exhibitors—the reason being in our opinion:—

- (1) that Indian films do not attract Indian audiences—the unknown having a greater appeal than the known, in the Cinema world—except as depicting recent or current events, when audiences like to recognise themselves or their friends: or to see again some pageantry in which they have participated;
- (2) good production of Indian character films—historical, literary—is difficult chiefly owing to the fact that Indian women are not readily available for women's parts.

6. Speaking generally, we do not think that films of Indian life would be more popular than films depicting Western life with Indian audiences.

We think that provided that they could be correctly reproduced as to dress, setting, etc., films depicting stories from National Literature would be liked by a section of the educated Indian communities: that scenes depicting village or street life with comical or familiar incidents would be appreciated by the illiterate: that topical scenes, of official shows, of festivals, and pageantry, of the daily life of the country would be appreciated by everybody partly because individuals like to recognise individuals on the films. But both history and mythology have elements which need care in the handling in India—history because of the clash of races, Mythology because of its connection with religion, and any films produced in these directions would need very great knowledge of inter-relationships, past and present: and of local susceptibilities.

## PART II.

*Social Aspects and Control.*

24. (a) In our opinion all films which make the wrong suggestion—whether through ignorance of the indigenous standpoint, or through deliberate exhibition of a low standard of the habits and morals of any country depicted—are injurious.

(c) That class of film is harmful which:—

- (1) depicts immoral relationships, cruelty or horrors, the latter two being particularly harmful to the general public, including children;
- (2) gives a wrong impression of western life, and makes the wrong suggestion to an Indian audience;
- (3) overstrains the nervous system, and debases the imagination of children.

(d) We consider that Censorship is not adequate in the cases of either "sex" or "crime" films.

25. We consider that the differences in social custom and outlook of East and West necessitate special consideration based on very special and particularized knowledge, in the censorship of films for this country.

26. (a) Too great care cannot be taken in censoring films likely to offend religious susceptibilities.

(b) "The Sign of the Cross," "Ben Hur" and "The Life of Christ" have been known to give offence to the religious susceptibilities of Indians and Europeans professing the Christian religion.

27. Many of the films of Western life exhibited in India have a tendency to lower Western civilization in the eyes of Indians: and though some of them may represent correctly a certain aspect of Western life, we consider that it is not an aspect which should be presented to an Indian audience because it is misleading as to the general life habits and ideals of the people. Films representing Western life seem to hold the attention of an uneducated Indian audience: and it seems to us inevitable that the audience should put the wrong construction on situations which have no parallel in Indian life.

As to the undesirable results which follow exhibition of the kind of film under consideration, it is difficult to speak generally: but we have known instances where a tendency to irregular conduct among Indians is excused on the plea of its being permissible to Europeans and in accordance with their supposed rule of life.

We would suggest that scenes which make an unpleasant or sensual appeal or suggestion should be strictly censored. Very often the suggestion made by the scene is worse than the actual staging. We consider that this fact should be borne in mind by Censors.

28. Films exhibiting horrors and cruelty have been known in individual cases to have a bad effect on children above the age of eight years. Sensual films have been known to have a bad effect on adolescents of the age of eleven and upwards. Films depicting crime have a bad effect on the precocious street boy class of child when he gets to see them: but he does not get to see the films as often in India as in England. Servant boy adolescents are distinctly harmed by films of crimes, cruelty and horror: and their opportunity for seeing such films is great in the chief towns of India. They have been known in individual cases to spend great proportion of their wages in going to the Pictures.

29. In our opinion certification should be strictly demarked as "suitable for children," or "for adults only" and forbidden to children. We should suggest certification as:—

- (a) For adults only—children not admitted.
- (b) Suitable for children.
- (c) For children.

We think that deliberate words inviting the attention of parents and guardians to a 'Children' film, are better than the suggestion that films not expressly forbidden are available for children. We say this partly because it directs attention to the fact that films should be considered, positively—not only negatively in relation to children and partly because it suggests the inclusion of children in a party of adults. Very often they are adults themselves who want to go to the films and must take the children because they cannot be left behind: 'suitable for children' would meet these cases.

(c) The third class suggested "For children" would be a guide to parents and school authorities in holiday times both as to accommodation available, and as to subject.

30. Our answer to Question 29 partly answers this question also. We suggest—

- (a) For performances *suitable for children*, ages 8 and upwards.
- (b) For performances *for children only*, from 2 years old upwards.

We consider that children under 2 should not be taken to Cinemas; they are apt to be a nuisance to other people. The excitement and the nervous strain on the eyes of children of tender age being undesirable—we would suggest that films should be advertised as certified, *i.e.*, in the classes above-named. And that lists of films so compiled, should be available for the inspection of parents and guardians at booking offices.

In the interest of Juveniles we would like to see rules made as to—

- (1) The buildings used as Picture Houses, in regard to emergency exits, in regard to sanitation, over-crowding and airlessness.
- (2) Admission and length of exposure for films certified as specially for children.

Children between the ages of 2 and 12 should not be admitted to films unaccompanied by responsible persons.

Exposures should be strictly limited in time. Children have been known to stay on from one performance to another regardless of the effect on eyes and on the nervous systems.

31. In our opinion Censorship is an effective method of guarding against misuse—only if proper supervision is also exercised by the Censorship Authorities and their nominees, after the films have been released.

32. We do not consider Censorship satisfactory in Calcutta. We have seen films which we consider objectionable for one or other of the reasons indicated in our previous answers. We know that there are supervisors who visit the Picture Houses: but there would not seem to be enough of them. There is only one woman appointed for Calcutta. She is a busy person and hitherto has attended the films in the interests of the Vigilance Society alone.

So far as we know no supervisors, men or women, have attended the films interests of Juveniles. We would suggest—

- (1) That more women supervisors should be appointed in the interests both of "Vigilance" and of Juveniles.
- (2) That bodies of women such as the Councils of Women in the several Provinces, should be asked how many voluntary workers can be supplied; and for what periods of time.

If every Picture House in any given locality cannot be adequately served by Volunteers, the appointment of at least one paid Woman Supervisor in the interests of "Vigilance" and of "Juveniles" should be considered.

33. If Censorship were interpreted as we would have it interpreted, none of the eventualities suggested in (a), (b) and (c) need occur.

34. (b) See answer to 32 *supra*. We think that whether one person or a group of persons is appointed at each centre we should still need at least one whole-time paid Woman Inspector or Supervisor in the circumstances indicated above.

36. We think that a system of Inspectors subordinate to the Board (Bombay and Calcutta) is a necessity. We are not capable of judging whether existing Inspectors are sufficiently well qualified; or whether any qualification has hitherto been required: but we suggest that the obvious qualifications should be demanded—*viz.*, acquaintance with the habits and habits of thought of the country, with the susceptibilities of the several communities in India and with the requirements of children as to health and nervous strain. Education sufficiently wide to include an acquaintance with English and Indian Literature is also indicated.

37. (b) There should certainly be some local Authority to whom Inspectors or Supervisors could represent the fact that fugitive local happenings rendered the exhibition of any particular film locally undesirable. Such authority should be empowered to deal with the situation.

40. Posters, Handbills and advertisements should be strictly censored. The Local Committee or other Local Control should deal with these upon the report of the Inspectors or Supervisors. The exercise of common sense and judgment should prevent this power from being unduly restrictive. Advertisements and Posters in our opinion often make more undesirable suggestions and do more harm than the films themselves. They certainly reach wider "audiences" than any Picture House.

**\*Oral Evidence of Miss CORNELIA SORABJI and Mrs. E. M. KELLAS, representing the Federation of University Women in India, Calcutta Branch, on Friday, the 16th December 1927.**

**Chairman:** What is the membership of the Federation of University Women in India?

*Miss Sorabji:* It has branches in Madras, in Bombay, and Calcutta, in the Punjab, and it had a branch in Delhi which has been reconstituted.

*Q.* How long has this Federation been in existence?

*A.* Since 1913 in Calcutta and it joined up with the Federations of the world,—28 countries of the world on every continent.

*Q.* I am sure you will excuse my ignorance about it but what is the membership in Calcutta?

*A.* The membership in Calcutta is about 200, with the Indian and English branches.

*Q.* When you say University women you mean graduates?

*A.* One of the rules is that you must be a graduate of your university. There is no difference. All university women are alike. We formed a unit of British University women, a unit of Indian University women, a unit of Australian University women, and then joined them all together in a Federation.

*Q.* Can you tell us whether this memorandum you have sent us was considered by any committee of your Federation?

*A.* It was circulated to every branch of the Federation all over India and then it was put before our general meeting of both Indian and English, I mean British, graduates, and then we elected a small committee to consider it. The two of us are on that committee. I am president of our local branch and secretary for all-India. This is Miss Kellas.

*Q.* And the memorandum was prepared by both of you?

*A.* By us and others, the group appointed to consider the questions.

*Q.* I suppose you spend your time between here and England mostly?

*A.* Well, I am tied down here because I am practising at the Bar here but I do go away to England as often as I can.

*Q.* I thought you were spending half the year in England and the other half in India?

*A.* I wish I could.

*Q.* Now there are several statements in this memorandum which rather conflict with our experience and the evidence we have received so far, in so far as Calcutta is concerned, I wish to draw your attention to that. Especially your statement about Indian films in paragraph 5 (1). "Indian films do not attract Indian audiences, the unknown having a greater appeal than the known in the cinema world, except as depicting recent or current events in which audiences are likely to recognise themselves or their friends". That seems to be rather opposed to the experience we ourselves have had about Indian films, and also the mass of evidence we have received that Indian films are very popular.

*A.* What do your other witnesses call Indian films.

*Q.* Those produced in India.

*A.* I think we were talking of the scenes rather than the production. We do not know what films were produced by what firms. We really mean the pictures thrown on the screen.

*Mrs. Kellas:* Stories of Indian life.

*Q.* It is quite opposed to our experience; here, as well as in Lahore, in Bombay, in Lucknow and in Peshawar we have ourselves seen the theatres crowded and we are therefore struck with your statement that Indian films do not attract Indian audiences.

*A.* I am afraid that was the evidence we collected; and you must remember the people who were speaking were the educated.

*Q.* Probably Westernised Indians.

*A.* Women graduates.

*Mr. Green:* You represent their tastes?

*A.* And their experience of what they had seen when they have been to the theatre mostly in Calcutta.



*Chairman*: I do not know if you have ever been to the Crown Theatre? Neither of you have been to the Crown or to the Purna or to the Empress?

A. No.

Q. Probably you frequent only these shows in Chowringhee.

A. Frequented by educated Indians.

Q. Or rather I would call them Westernised Indians, if you don't mind. That is also our experience of course, so far as Westernised Indians are concerned, they don't care so much for Indian films. But as regards ordinary Indian clerks, shopkeepers and such other people, the Indian films seem to be proving very popular, although we know them to be very crude productions yet.

A. The Indian student class does not care for them.

Q. There is also another thing about which I should like to know what your experience is. You say detective or crook tales would seem on the whole not to be as popular with the Indian as with the English audience. And the same with sports. Now supposing it is a good boxing film, or a game of football or something of that sort?

A. Well, you know how they crowd to these things in England and you must remember that the largest part, you might say, of the audience at cinemas have been students and the students look out a great deal more for what might help them in their work. They are of course beginning to take an interest in sports but not the kind of interest that an English audience has. And then detective and crook tales, stories of burglary and so on are tremendously liked in England but not so much sought after here. In fact I don't think detective and crook books are read so much in India as in England.

Q. Have you seen any Indian films yourself?

A. Yes.

Q. Which?

A. I can't remember the names.

Q. Where did you see them?

A. In Calcutta and in the city.

Q. Probably it was sometime ago.

A. It was some little time ago. I did not go to any specially for this—I mean specially before writing this note.

Q. I quite see that. Again No. 6. We only want to understand each other. "Speaking generally we do not think that films of Indian life would be more popular than films depicting Western life with Indian audiences". I do not know on what you base that statement.

A. It is very difficult to get films of Indian life, of the good Indian life. Indian orthodox people would not like their lives to be put on films. But we have said elsewhere that village scenes are liked. It is very difficult to get women to act for films so that you cannot put on most of them. Now, English film tales deal with social life—don't they? With eating and drinking and things like that; love-making.

*Mr. Green*: What about mythology?

A. We have talked about that later on. The answer goes on to deal with that. But we have said first that scenes depicting Indian life, loving and living and feasting—you cannot get those in India, so you have to have Western films.

*Mr. Green*: Are you sure of that last statement, that you cannot get them? We have seen films produced in the city which reproduce scenes of village life.

A. But you cannot get orthodox people to act for films.

Q. I will leave that with Mr. Neogy to settle.

A. I am probably not making myself clear. What I mean is—you must take one's evidence for what you think it is worth . . . .

*Chairman:* Oh go on, Miss Sorabji, we would like to hear your views.

*A.* The feeling is this, that Eastern audiences like to see Western films.

*Q.* That is quite true as regards Westernised Indians.

*A.* We say that it would be difficult as a whole, as a practice, to get films depicting Indian life until you can get more women actors because men cannot properly act women's parts. Then you want to make your films of Indian life parallel to your films of Western life. If you think about it, there is a great deal of love-making, feasting and all that in a Western film. In our experience we have got no parallel to that in Indian life, educated Indian life, the life of the same class that you could put on the films. As to mythology we go on to say that provided they can be correctly reproduced as to dress, etc., stories from national literature would be liked by the educated. But scenes depicting village life would be liked by the illiterate as well as the others, typical scenes of festivals and pageantries or scenes of daily life which would be appreciated by everybody, partly because individuals like to recognise themselves on the film. So you see we have divided it up and tried to get it as exact as possible. Then as regards mythology and history, we think that as mythology is mixed up with religion we have to be very careful not to affect susceptibilities; and history is no use unless you can get the dresses and all that correctly. For instance I have seen a Sanskrit drama done with Brahmins dressed up as Mussulmans. Well, that is giving a wrong impression. You must have all the details perfect.

*Q.* That is what you had in mind? Of course history within 300 years might create difficulties, but before that, scenes from the Ramayana and Mahabharata can be reproduced without any difficulty.

*A.* Yes, we approve of that, if they can be done with correctness.

*Q.* Probably you are aware that it is being done in Bombay very largely.

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Now, the Indians whom you have come across in those cinemas you have been to are mostly of the educated classes?

*A.* When I have been to the cinema I have seen people whom I know of the educated classes, sitting in the class of seat I was in; but in the well of the theatre, the pit, I have also seen the seats very very packed with students.

*Q.* I am sorry to say the other day when we were at the Globo the 4 anna gallery was empty although a very attractive sex film was on the screen, "The Beauty Prize", which had many enchanting scenes?

*A.* I cannot account for that but that must happen from time to time.

*Q.* It was advertised very widely, all sorts of beauties in bathing suits were shown on the posters; notwithstanding all that, we found the 4 anna seats empty.

*A.* What time was that?

*Q.* Six o'clock.

*A.* That will show you how experience varies from occasion to occasion and we may all be speaking correctly and yet differing.

*Q.* That is the difficulty in this matter,—to draw general conclusions from particular facts. Now, do you think that the censorship is not adequate in the case of either sex or crime films? Do you say that even of the Bengal censorship?

*A.* It is very difficult to criticise people who are in authority but we concluded that as there were sex and crime pictures of which we did not approve, that the censorship could not have been adequate or they would not have been there.

*Q.* Would you avoid in these films all love-making scenes?

*Mrs. Kellas:* Oh, no.

*Q.* What is it then that you object to?

*A.* Well, I think one thing is to see scenes where people are insufficiently clad. I have seen posters in particular—we mention that later—which were simply a disgrace.

**Q.** And if you get it in the posters you get it in the films?

**Mr. Green:** They don't always agree?

**A.** The poster is usually exaggerated.

**Chairman:** We are told the Bengal Censorship is very strict.

**Miss Sorabji:** I may tell you I was speaking to Mrs. Stanley about that. Sometimes films are passed; I don't know how this works out, but films were passed in Bombay which had been banned in Calcutta.

**Q.** Bengal is proud of its standard.

**A.** We have also heard that films banned in Bombay came over to Calcutta.

**Q.** Now, do you advocate a different standard as regards moral tone from that adopted in England? You would not trust to the judgment of the Censorship Board as regards moral tone?

**A.** I wonder what you think yourself about it. You see, things which are harmless for an English audience, which can interpret it in the right way, may be harmful to an Indian audience which has not got the key to the situation. For instance, love-making scenes. Things done openly in England are not done openly here.

**Q.** What you see on the screen in England is not openly done in England either.

**Mrs. Kellas:** The whole background and tradition is different; you are up against a different tradition.

**Q.** Would you stop the Black Bottom Revue here?

**A.** I have not seen it.

**Q.** But you have seen many of the revues here?

**A.** I think many of them are disgraceful.

**Q.** You would like to have them banned in India?

**Mr. Green:** You would like to see them banned in England also?

**A.** Of course.

**Chairman:** Do you want a different standard in this country as regards the general moral tone?

**A.** No, I think it is a pity that this country should be getting the worst. Here in India the whole situation of the relations between men and women is changing. You are having women just coming to a new status and it is such a pity.

**Q.** Well, many of us consider it a pity that Indian girls should take to dancing, but you don't mean to stop them?

**A.** But at this transitional time you are getting your students, for example, (and they are a very important part of the community) you are getting your Indian students going in hundreds to these films where a very low standard of Western life is being shown.

**Q.** The difficulty is for us to recognise that it is a low standard when the British public approve of it.

**Mr. Green:** Not approve, tolerate it!

**Chairman:** Not only tolerate it by approve of it by the fact that the Censorship Board pass it.

**Mr. Coatman:** The Censor passes all sorts of things; he cannot stop them.

**Chairman:** And the public applaud and approve of them.

**A.** There is a whole audience, say, of students. Well, they are not going to know that that is not the common way in which everybody behaves in the West.

**Q.** Do you think that any college student is so senseless as to think that this is the normal life in England?

**A.** Well, I don't know. If in England I had seen a whole lot of Indian-life pictures on a like basis, I do not say I would not think it was the normal life of the people. I know *pardah nashin* ladies have looked on at these scenes and thought it the normal life. And I have known another thing.

In England they realise that if a man and woman talk together, do anything together, even dance together, that is all right, but in India they don't.

*Q. Purdah nashin ladies* would not like ladies to appear with their faces uncovered.

*A.* And many other things. But not only *purdah nashins*. What I am trying to say is that the ignorance of the people of the customs and standards of Western life does make a difference. I don't mean to compel a different standard but to take greater care in the pictures you present.

*Q.* We don't present them. The pictures are presented not by us, not by Indians. It is a matter for the westerners to stop it and not for us. Why should they appeal to India to stop it?

*A.* That is quite true.

*Q.* But have you any tangible evidence to show that these films have really an injurious effect on the people of this country so as to call for any action on the part of Government?

*A.* Our experience is that the tendency is that way, and I think we agreed about it in our discussions.

*Q.* We should like to have something more tangible than that?

*Mrs. Kellas:* It is very difficult to show any tangible evidence.

*Q.* You see, we have to recommend legislative action in that matter, and therefore we should like to have something more tangible before we can make our recommendations.

*A.* I have known of instances in which individuals have excused lapses from what they would regard as right action for themselves on the ground that it is normal action in the west as exhibited on the films.

*Q.* Is it on the screen or what is it you have in mind in making that statement?

*A.* Irregularities between men and women.

*Q.* That is the case everywhere, is it not? I mean irregularities of sex conduct?

*A.* I think we would rather not pursue this matter. We cannot give you instances.

*Q.* We don't want instances, but how is it more due to the cinema than to the reading of novels so far as college youths are concerned who are seeing pictures, plays, illustrated papers and so on?

*A.* It is all one influence, but perhaps seeing the thing in motion has a greater effect on the mind than reading a book.

*Q.* Can you say that it has produced such tangible result?

*A.* Can even doctors say that a certain result is due to a certain cause? We can only say that the tendency is in that direction.

*Q.* Did you come across the Social Hygiene Delegation that came to this country?

*A.* Yes, we were asked to send a delegate from the Federation to the Congress in London and we sent Mrs. Lindsay as our delegate, and she gave evidence there.

*Q.* Have you seen the memorandum published by the Social Hygiene Delegation when they left this country? Do you think they are right in saying that in every province they visited the evil influence of the cinema was cited by educationists and representative citizens as one of the major factors in lowering the standard of sex conduct and thereby tending to increase the dissemination of disease?

*A.* They talk of every province.—we did not give evidence before them, —we never gave them that impression, nor did they ask us about it.

*Q.* Did you discuss the cinema with them at all?

*A.* Not at all; they were discussing other things like Hygiene, and they did not talk about cinema at all. But you must remember that we did not appear before them as a Federation.

*Q.* Did you come across any such case as this. For instance, while in India the delegation found that the films, which owing to their generally suggestive nature had been rejected by large cities in England, were or had recently been in circulation in India?

*A.* We don't know anything about it.

*Q.* I suppose you have seen films in England, and I suppose the same standard of films are being shown here?

*A.* More or less.

*Q.* You don't believe that this country is flooded with films which are not shown in the west?

*A.* Not in my experience.

*Q.* So I think the influence of the cinema on the youth of the country must be the same as in other countries?

*A.* It depends on what you bring to see a film and what you have in your mind. If you have got in your mind a different standard altogether from the west, then you might read into a film what the western youth might not read into it.

*Q.* Is it not more dependent upon the pre-existing temperament rather than on the influence which comes into it?

*A.* So far as individuals are concerned, it would depend on the individual temperament. So far as classes or communities are concerned, it would depend on the outlook of the life of that community.

*Q.* But you will admit that unless there are some love scenes the cinema would cease to be attractive, would it not? It won't be a commercial proposition?

*A.* I daresay I do not know the cinema from the commercial point of view.

*Q.* Passionate love scenes and other scenes?

*A.* I don't think you should allow such things. We were discussing in our Group the other day, for instance, things like undressing and going to bed in public and things like that might really be noted down by the police in a book, I mean things which are most suggestive should be banned.

*Q.* I do not know if you have seen the general rules of censorship. (A copy of the Bombay Censor Board Rules was given to the witness to read through.)

*A.* If these rules are observed, it will be all right. So far as we can judge cursorily, it covers everything which we have in mind.

*Q.* They are more or less the rules which are observed in England, and you cannot suggest any addition to these rules?

*A.* No.

*Q.* I suppose you recognise the value of the cinema not only as a means of education but also as a means of amusement to the poor, innocent people?

*A.* We appreciate the cinema tremendously.

*Q.* It is of great value to the labourer after a hard day's work to divert him from other mischief, otherwise he will be employed in other directions. Perhaps even the college students whom you have in mind probably might go to worse places if you had not the cinema?

*A.* We think the cinema can do a tremendous amount of good.

*Q.* Probably in those early days when the cinema had not come into existence some of the college students used to visit undesirable places and spend their time?

*A.* Yes.

*Mrs. Kellas:* I feel strongly about the influences of the cinema on children.

*Q.* What do you advise us to do?

*A.* You should have special childrens' shows. I would prohibit all children under 10 or 12 from going to the cinemas unless they are special childrens' performances, because from the 4th to the 10th year the children begin to

have imagination. The serials have a most baneful effect on the minds of young children.

*Mr. Green:* They are going out of fashion now.

*Mrs. Kellas:* Sometimes the children think of the cruelty that is shown on the picture. Such things have a terrible effect on a child's imagination.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* Miss Sorabji, how is it that you have not replied to our question No. 14 because your family takes so much interest in education? I suppose you agree that there should be an increase of cinemas for educational purposes?

A. If you increase the cinemas for educational purposes, it would help the growth of the industry also. But I will tell you why we did not write to you, because we did not know the relationship of the film industry to production, I mean we did not know enough about producers.

Q. Do you favour the cinema as a means of instruction in the class room?

A. Yes, we do.

Q. I suppose it will be more satisfactory than magic lanterns?

A. I think so.

Q. You said somewhere that Indian women will not be available to act for the cinemas. What steps should be taken to bring them into this industry?

A. You can get very few people to do acting.

Q. You can get ladies from the theatres to act for the cinema, but you don't get ladies from respectable families. What should we do to attract respectable ladies to this line?

A. There is the Brahmo community. One or two ladies from that community have been acting for the film in India. Of course, for "The Light of Asia" you got very charming ladies, and I think the same sort of women will come forward as a public duty if properly encouraged. I think that may be done through the influence of the Tagore family or through the producer of "The Light of Asia".

Q. You said that men cannot take the part of women as after all cinema is a dumb show?

A. I don't think that men can ever act for women, I don't think that men can act or move like women.

Q. Now, you are in favour of assisting the Empire film industry also?

A. We have not answered those questions. We have not considered them.

Q. I suppose you have seen many productions made by the missionaries in India?

*Mrs. Kellas:* I have seen one or two.

Q. I suppose they prepare these films here in order to raise funds in America?

A. That side of it is growing, because there are special people out from Home who do nothing but film work. Their object is to remove ignorance in Britain about this country more than raising funds.

Q. We were told that they give a wrong impression about India and Indians in their cinemas?

A. I should not think so.

*Chairman:* Do they show them devil worship and things of that kind?

A. The film I saw did not show that kind of thing. The one taken the other day at Kalimpong showed the ordinary bazar life, how the mission industries are developed and how the mission homes are run.

Q. I suppose it is to appeal to the sympathy of the people who give money there by telling them 'look at these barbarians, we are going to India to redeem them'? Is that the idea?

A. That is not the idea at all. They want to show the Indian life with a view to educate the people of Great Britain to understand what Indian mind is like which they do not know.

**Sir Haroon Jaffer:** I suppose most of the films you have seen are American. Have you seen any British films?

**Miss Sorabji:** I have seen a good many films, but I could not distinguish whether they were English or American. I thought "Ben Hur" was a British film.

**Mr. Green:** No, it is not.

**Miss Sorabji:** Unless you are on the Censor Board or you go to the cinema with the specific object of finding out the place of origin of a certain film, you cannot find it out.

**Mr. Neogy:** You have given a list of subjects which could be treated for film production, but I was surprised to find that you did not mention Bengali novels and stories, some of which have been translated into the various vernaculars?

**A.** I thought we did mention them, we did mention stories from international literature, and we meant both Bengali and Sanskrit, stories from Bankim Chandra Chatterji, Tagore and other distinguished people. We want all those.

**Q.** Do you think some of those stories would make an appeal to markets outside India if they were properly filmed?

**A.** I think that, judging from what I know of England, (which is the only country I really know outside India), anything relating to India is now becoming very popular. I say so because I myself was asked to write plays for an English theatre but I could not do it. I know they would be very glad to get plays or stories or anything concerning India, and I imagine that if the best of our books here dealing with Indian life were put on the screen, they would be very popular in England; I say not only in England but also abroad.

**Q.** You have referred to certain irregular conduct and lapses which are sought to be excused on the ground that such things do happen in the west. Are you thinking of high life?

**A.** You know that I have lived for a very long time in Calcutta, say, for about 20 years, and I have been in touch with almost every section of the Indian community as few individuals have been in touch with them, and I am not thinking only of high life, I am thinking of more than one rung of the ladder of life, I mean the classes that would produce the cinema audiences.

**Q.** Now, do you find any change in the outlook of the Indian *Purdah* women which you can attribute to the cinema?

**A.** What I call strictly orthodox *purdah* women would not go to the cinemas at all. But there are women who call themselves *purda nashin* who do go to screened boxes in a cinema, and among those women I do find a difference in their outlook.

**Q.** Difference for good or evil?

**A.** I think they themselves feel some change, but I should be betraying their confidence if I discuss that any further. I think we should not talk about *purda nashin* women any more.

**Q.** Is not the proper remedy for whatever ignorance there may prevail in the country about western life, to see these things and get accustomed to them? How else can you possibly induce a knowledge of these things among these classes?

**A.** I don't think that ever hurts him.

**Q.** Even the romantic aspect of western life?

**A.** We do not object to showing what is allowable in a film. We only object to showing things which are really undesirable. I will tell you one film which I saw and which I thought was likely to produce a baneful influence. I saw the behaviour of a small western boy shown in the film in one of the theatres in Chowringhee. He was drunk and he got sick, I mean the whole thing was absolutely vulgar, the whole thing was disgraceful. It contained some sort of humour and it may be appreciated in the west, but

not here. It was shown to show the actual high life of a western child and how his father lived. I heard both the women and some of the school boys who were with us bitterly complained about that film.

*Mr. Coatsman:* Can you see any prospects of educated women taking to film industry for a livelihood?

*A.* The only possibility I can see is in the Brahmo community. I do not know whether they will do it, but they might be induced to do it, because occasionally certain Brahmo ladies act at Tagore's Plays and do it for charity, and I think if they are induced they might gradually come into this. And I can also say that if a company were making really big Indian historical films, certain patriotic Indian ladies would come forward to help.

*Q.* But I am thinking of something rather different. I am thinking of the professional actresses of a good type such as we get in the west. What chances do you see of that in India?

*A.* None at present, I should say. But that may be because it has never been suggested to them. I can imagine somebody like George Alexander, who had a school for actresses in England, getting these women together and directing them in a school just like a school for anything else. They are very clever at acting. I don't think there are any people one has come across anywhere who are so adaptable at acting, so successful. I think it has never been suggested to them. I think that is really the answer to your question, that it has never been suggested to them, but I do not see any reason why, if somebody who spoke with the proper appeal could get the right sort of women together, it should not be possible some time. At present I myself could not point to anybody myself and say "These people will make good actresses."

*Mr. Green:* Miss Sorabji, I want to ask you a question really on behalf of my friend Colonel Crawford who is not able to be present, in connection with question 27. I take it you object to misrepresentation either on the screen or on the stage or in a novel, because any untrue thing is bad?

*A.* Yes. We are answering the question in respect of the cinema but, of course, we equally object to that in literature or on the stage.

*Q.* Quite. And if you considered that literature or the stage or the cinema was showing something which may exist, but is a parody on the better side of nature, you would still object to that misrepresentation?

*A.* We would like it not to be shown in India at any rate. I think we have stated here that we object to anything which tends to lower western civilisation in the eyes of Indians and, though some of them may represent correctly a certain aspect of western life, we consider that it is not an aspect which should be presented to an Indian audience.

*Q.* May I suggest to you that the converse might also apply?—about eastern life being misrepresented in the west? Now, monogamy is not necessarily followed in this country. I take it you would strongly object to a film being shown in England depicting the reverse of monogamy as being a generally prevalent custom, because an English audience might misunderstand it.

*A.* It depends. Of course in some communities it is a religious permission to have more than one wife. Well, if you had a story relating to that community with more than one wife depicted on the screen I should say that that was not misrepresentation as regards that community.

*Q.* But if particular stress is laid on the fact that in India monogamy is not followed, that would, I think, appeal to the western mind as being rather extraordinary and showing Indians in rather a bad light?

*A.* Let me put it in another way. Of course the Hindu ranks sometimes have more than one wife and the ladies are perfectly charming to each other. Now, if I write a story for the film depicting a Hindu household with more ladies than one and show them to be perfectly charming, this is not monogamy but it is not misrepresentation and it is not damaging. So it is a little difficult to answer that question on the ground of monogamy alone.

*Q.* We will put it on another ground. In reply to the Chairman on the question of sex irregularities, the Chairman pointed out that similar irre-



gularities existed in this country. Would you not object to films being exhibited abroad representing such sex irregularities?

A. Now, I will tell you the difference which to my mind exists between India and England. I will tell it to you in the words that an Indian lady used to me. She said: Amongst us in the Hindu household men do not treat their wives in public as Englishmen on the films or elsewhere treat their wives. They keep that treatment for bazar women. Now, that gives you an impersonal instance of what I wanted to say to you. When I go into a strictly orthodox household, I think Mr. President will bear me out, there is such modesty of behaviour between husband and wife that, unless I am considered as, so to speak, very intimate or very friendly with the family, the wife cannot be in the same room with me while the husband is there. Now, that makes one difference, and the children in the household are brought up on the same principle. So at once you get a difference in the outlook. And that is what I was trying to say. When you get exaggerations of personal behaviour you can see what it may lead to in the minds of the looker-on.

*Chairman:* The difficulty is if you go that length, most of the western life they see in this country would be very strange to them.

A. Yes. I think we can gradually tell them. But when a man and woman are talking together, or they are not doing what is improper,— it wants propaganda I think as well as the films. I think that you really want propaganda among the educated women. You want some connection between educated women who know these things and can interpret these things to the other people and then you will get your proper outlook.

### **\*Oral Evidence of Mr. BEN ARAKIE, Calcutta, on Friday, the 16th December 1927.**

*Chairman:* Are you a citizen of the United States of America?

A. No.

Q. You are an Indian?

A. No.

Q. From what country do you come?

A. I am a Hebrew, born in India.

Q. Therefore you are an Indian.

A. I suppose you can call me that.

Q. Your home is in India?

A. My people have been here for forty years.

Q. Then why do you disclaim being an Indian? You will excuse me. Now, were you connected with the cinema trade before?

A. Yes, in England and America. I have worked with most of the world-famous companies. I have been dissociated with the industry for five years and ever since I came back I have made every effort to start a company with private capital mostly among my friends well-known in Calcutta and that is the reason why I shall trouble you to give me some your valuable time,— to show you how difficult it is for people, even though they have experience, to get anybody to invest money in the cinema industry for the present.

Q. Why is it so?

A. It is so because I think the first efforts of the picture people in the country did not meet with much success. That is how it strikes me. A big company and big things must be handled in a big way.

*Mr. Green:* To what company are you referring?

A. Chiefly to Madans. The moment their company was formed, they booted it. They were going to do wonderful things.

*Chairman:* I think we had better keep off names.

*Mr. Green:* I am sorry. I didn't think he was referring to an existing company.

**Q.** You mean the failures or, rather, the supposed failures?

**A.** Not exactly failures. But rather the non-successes. People anticipated a lot from it. They hoped for more and they did not get it. So they fought, shy of anybody else going into it.

**Q.** What do you think is the remedy for it?

**A.** There is no remedy except that some assistance must be forthcoming, provided there is promising work being done by that person.

**Q.** From whom do you want that assistance?

**A.** Certainly, first of all you must help yourself in this world. And then you must get some assistance from the higher powers. Well now, if an effort is being made to try and get Government to give so much—if, for instance, like they do in America, a man who has a promising play and understands his medium, goes to the financiers and banks there. They start the play; they have a mortgage on the play—they are quite secure. The bank gets a good return and he meets with success too in the business.

**Q.** You want banking facilities?

**A.** Well, the banks don't know anything about this industry. But if the Government were to give some assistance then everybody would realise there is money in it.

**Q.** You want the Government to give financial assistance?

**A.** Some assistance in promising cases. Not to any Tom, Dick and Harry who comes forward and says: I am a genius.

**Q.** On security?

**A.** No. The security is his play. I come to you and say: here is a play of any famous author, or here is an original story of somebody as handed in. Well, it has got a chance of success. If I bring it to you, it will take you five minutes to realise if there is sense or nonsense in what I say. It is just like a business proposition. Jute, for instance, is a paying proposition. You will give me an order to-day. If I come and say "Coal"—You will say, I have some coal shares already.

**Q.** So you think there ought to be some agency by which the Government should help any deserving cases?

**A.** It is not a question of deserving cases. It is a question of man having really shown something. If I have produced a two-reel drama and brought it out and if there is some evidence of talent.

**Q.** I know, that is about story writing.

**A.** It is films I was referring to. Only a story does not make a complete picture. It is because most of the companies are not familiar with their medium that they are not making a success of it. I spoke just now about a film company I have in view, mostly with private capital, but perhaps I might make it a public company and have public shares. But I have been promised most of the capital privately. Now after all these years, after having become well known in business in Calcutta. . . .

**Q.** On what scale are you thinking of starting it?

**A.** On a small scale. A lakh and a half.

*Mr. Green:* May I know what this gentleman's other business is?

**A.** I am a jute broker,—for the last five years.

*Chairman:* You believe in the potentiality of the cinema?

**A.** I think there are great possibilities. I am not going to cater for the small Indian market. I shall produce pictures which I hope with a little luck and hard work to put into the bigger market of America. From their inquiries, I know they are anxious to see some pictures of Indian life.

**Q.** You think Indian pictures must have an attraction?

**A.** They must. The very fact that so many millionaires make trips overseas is sufficient assurance that people are curious and interested in India. There are so many millions who cannot leave their homes.

**Q.** Have you any experience of any Indian films shown in America?

A. I cannot think of a single one.

Q. Was "The Light of Asia" shown in America?

A. I doubt very much. "The Light of Asia" to my mind was a decent effort but I don't think that an American producer would put it on. He must be very lucky to get it over. In a year perhaps there are three or four British pictures even. Foreign pictures do not stand a chance unless they are super-productions.

Q. They must be the real stuff?

A. They must arouse their curiosity or they must arouse their interest or they must be some sort of dramas showing the life of people here. There are a lot of beautiful stories written about the lives of Europeans here with Indian scenes and Indian sceneries. That is primarily what I have in mind. Indian pictures probably don't appeal. I had a few stories written a short time ago which I sent on to America, and the producers wrote to me that if these had a single American or English character they would have considered them. They want English or American life, European surroundings. A purely Indian picture, unless it is something very superior, would not appeal. There is one exception—"Kismet" which the Robertson . . . Co. produced in 1920. All the scenes are laid in Baghdad, and it is a very spectacular background with charming scenery.

Q. But what about "The Ten Commandments"? Has that got anything English about it? Isn't it more eastern than western?

A. Yes, but then don't you see there again they have interwoven a story which gives you a lesson from the Bible. The Bible is only the background of the story.

Q. And "Abu Hassan"—a film which was exhibited for quite a long time, the scene was laid in the east.

A. I do not remember ever seeing the film.

Q. Therefore, that is your impression. And you think that is also the case in Europe and in England?

A. It is chiefly the case in Europe.

Q. Unless the film is connected with some western topic or the westerner's life in the east, you don't think Indian pictures will take?

A. Not a purely Indian picture—but if it has some special features about it. For instance, you say "The Light of Asia". If it is produced in the proper way. Take a historical picture, the picture for instance I saw only last night, "Durgesh Nandini". Now that would not take there. That has only got purely local historical interest.

Q. So that your attempt is going to be to produce pictures which will be accepted in the foreign market?

A. There is clearly no money in the Indian market. In the foreign market they have 40,000 theatres throughout the world with millions of people to show to.

Q. Have you got figures of the theatres in America?

A. I have some of them. I have figures up to 1923.

Q. I heard it was 20,500.

A. 20,000 was the last I heard.

Q. The whole of Europe has 19,000.

A. It was a little less in my time—I think it was 15,000, perhaps there are more now.

Q. Now what is it you suggest in order to develop this industry? You suggest that there should be some financial backing.

A. And there ought to be some means for people here to secure some little assistance from people who know more than they. American experts or English to guide them, to help them.

Q. You want experts to be brought out?

A. They will do that themselves. You can't expect anybody else to bring out experts.

**Q.** Supposing Government had a studio of their own too for producing their own films?

**A.** Educational films? That is quite a good idea. Probably because Government would have more facilities for producing these pictures. Supposing you told me to produce a picture of Jute, I would make an attempt, I might be able to produce a decent picture of it—but if the Government undertook it and they got somebody to handle it properly, they could make it much better, because they have much more facilities. But for Government to undertake dramas. . . .

*Mr. Green:* Oh, there is no intention of doing that.

**A.** I thought so, but there was some reference to it in the papers.

*Chairman:* Supposing there is such an institution, with experts attached to train people in this country. Would that be useful?

**A.** The only training you can get is practical training. You see, you cannot make a school out of the cinema. The cinema is a medium where the projection is made on the spot and it is simply by seeing an expert work that the lesson can be learned.

**Q.** You think it would be more profitable to send people across in order to understand?

**A.** Far better.

**Q.** Scholarships?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** But don't you think there will be difficulty in finding proper attention in the other countries? Are they not jealous of their trade secrets?

**A.** No. The American cinema industry is the most helpful co-operative industry in the world. It has a marvellous organisation. Companies hire, lend, borrow each other's talent. There can be no better evidence of the facilities they give each other than that.

**Q.** Do you think Indian students will be admitted?

**A.** Oh! admitted and welcomed. I have a friend there now—he used to be with Madans, here in Calcutta. Well, he is a cousin of mine, he is also a Jewish gentleman. He was very keen. When I came back to this country he used to come and ask me about American conditions. I told him he was wasting his time here. I urged him to go away to America. He went. He has been treated well and has got on well. He is on the Universal staff there as a scenario writer. They have welcomed him. He is friends with most of the world-famous people.

**Q.** You don't think there will be much difficulty?

**A.** Not at all. There is an example there. He is more Indian than European, because his home is India. He has been settled here so long that he is more Indian than English. But he is treated quite well and is friends with the best of them.

**Q.** Some people say it is difficult in America, specially in America.

**A.** Well, I have given you a concrete instance and I have been there myself.

**Q.** How many years were you in America?

**A.** About 14 months.

**Q.** You went to all the studios?

**A.** Oh yes. I worked in them. I used to get good work. In the cinema it is all a matter of type. Take a picture like. . . . I have worked with Rudolph Valentino. I went into the studio there one day, I was an ordinary actor, I was standing about looking for work. The man called out to me and asked me if I had any work to do that day. I said, no. He said: well, I have got an engagement for you, and gave me the French workman's part. Now, that was a matter of type. He was looking for a particular type. There may have been a handsome Englishman standing there, with blue eyes. But he wanted somebody with a certain type of face and he gave me the part.

**Q.** Now, take the technique of photography?

**A.** It is improving in India. It was very poor when I came back five years ago but it is improving considerably.

**Q.** Do you think any good can be done by sending them abroad with scholarships?

**A.** It must do them some good. But photography is also, after all, dependent on one's efforts in the science itself. I mean photography is not so much a thing that can be taught. If you are a good photographer you can become a good camera-man too.

**Q.** They have a lot to learn. Is there no other suggestion you want to make as to how to encourage the growth of the industry in this country?

**A.** The main thing in any industry is finance and then helpful encouragement. If you encourage a person you push him forward. But if you discourage him you damp his spirits.

**Mr. Green:** I understand in America you were actually an actor?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Did you take part in anything else?—such as writing scenarios?

**A.** I made four attempts and I sent them all to the studios.

**Q.** You were not employed as such. You were only employed as actor in the studio, you say, and technical assistant?

**A.** In "Kismet" for instance they employed me as assistant to the Director. No, not directly under the Director. But in big American efforts.

**Q.** I only want to get a general idea. Had you any experience of finance in America?

**A.** You mean actual finance in connection with the industry? No.

**Q.** But here in India I understand you have worked out costs as a business proposition?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** And you have put that before friends, I understand, to start with and you contemplate eventually possibly making it a public company?

**A.** I do so. But it is no use saying things in advance. I have tried these things for five years.

**Q.** Now, you struck me as being somewhat optimistic. You hoped to invade the American market with a company starting with a lakh and a half?

**A.** It is not only money that matters. I will give you an instance.

**Q.** Do you hope to get results commensurate with American technique with a capital of one and a half lakhs?

**A.** No. How can that be?—Commensurate with American technique? But my first efforts are going to be small two-reel dramas.

**Q.** Comics, by any chance? Because an American expert told me he does think there are possibilities for two-reel comics from India.

**A.** Oh, you may get one or two across. But I don't think it is feasible as a regular business.

**Q.** Do you know anything of the system of distribution and exhibition in America?

**A.** I must say I have not actually done anything in this line myself. Each circuit has a proportion classed roughly, and they have their own chain of theatres.

**Q.** I have heard it said that these circuits are practically entirely occupied with their own productions, a very small proportion being occupied by non-circuit productions.

**A.** Mostly, but they also have some foreign productions.

**Q.** I know. I can give you an example as well of productions which owing to their outstanding merits got across. Do you hope with your experience and capital to be able to do that?

**A.** We can but try and hope.

**Mr. Coatman:** Will you take on this film company as a whole time job?

**A.** Well, you see, I have quite a lucrative job at present and I am doing very well. My own people think me very foolish to give it up at all. I shan't give it up completely but combine the two and gradually give it up completely when I can afford to.

**Q.** Where will you find your staff?

**A.** The chief staff I require for the present is an expert camera-man. I have one or two subjects in mind which I hope to turn into screens and produce it with the help of local talent to begin with.

**Q.** And you will do the directing yourself?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** And where will you do your developing and printing and so on?

**A.** We will have to have a developing plant. It is not so costly.

**Q.** You won't send your negative to America or England?

**A.** No. But we can make one positive of it. The reproduction of the negative is very expensive. Supposing a picture is taking on, we may have to make 100 copies of it. We won't have the necessary finance for those 100 copies. What we do is to make one positive . . .

**Q.** Which do you think is your most hopeful foreign market when you start producing?

**A.** I should think England.

**Q.** Why?

**A.** There is a certain association that English people have with India more than Americans. They have more interests and most of them may have relatives or somebody else in India. Some things of India do interest them more. I have lived in England for 1½ years. I was there during the war, and since the war I had been there for about a year.

**Q.** Does it strike you that great interest in India is being shown in England?

**A.** There is more curious interest in America, but I should not say that the English people are not interested in India.

**Q.** I would like to take up that point about that curious interest because I have a great deal to do with the press and I am making a very close study of the American, the English and the dominion press. My experience is that in England and in the dominions such news of India as appears is the sort of stuff that Englishmen want to hear about India. They want to hear about Government, about other work that is going on here and so on. The American press only features India when there is something bizarre or exciting—a riot, murder, or divorce, or something of that sort. Is that your experience?

**A.** I think you are right. That should be the case, because Americans are not politically or financially interested in India so much as the English people are.

**Q.** What sort of Indian films do you think would go down with the American public?

**A.** I will just give you an instance. I do not know if you ever saw a picture called—I forget the name. It is a picture in which Norma Talmadge took part. The background of the scenes was all Indian, the two leading characters were an English girl and an Englishman, and it was a very charming picture. I can assure you. Unless there is something strange or unique in the picture they would not care for it.

**Q.** Any way, you look to England for your foreign market?

**A.** Yes.

**Mr. Neogy:** You have said you intend to have a company floated with a capital of 1½ lakhs of rupees.

**A.** To begin with.

**Q.** Do you hope with this capital to produce things which would appeal to the American market?

**A.** It is not the amount that counts, it is the picture, it is the subject and how you deal with it.

**Q.** I am thinking more of the technical side, whether the technical aspect of the production would come up to the American standard?

**A.** It is impossible. In order to keep up to the American standard you will have to have all experts, but that is impossible now. I can make an improvement on former efforts here.

**Q.** Do you think that class of pictures will have a market in America?

**A.** Provided the subject is an interesting one. It is not the play that is of importance, it is the production of the play on the screen that is important. You can have very nice stories but unless you produce them properly on the screen they are of no use.

**Q.** Supposing you grant scholarships for our people to go abroad and get training in various branches of this industry, what are the branches in which you think they ought to get themselves trained?

**A.** Every branch, before you can reach the super-excellence of some of the American standards. There it is a huge industry.

**Q.** Supposing you have to produce an Indian subject, would it be possible for a non-Indian to write a scenario for an Indian subject, that is to say, a man who has not sufficient knowledge of Indian ways of life, Indian conditions, etc.?

**A.** It will be possible for him to put more technical perfection into it, but he will never be able to make it correctly Indian.

**Q.** And to that extent the training of a young man for scenario writing abroad would not be of much use except for the technical aspect of it?

**A.** But there is so much to be learnt in the technical aspect.

*Chairman:* Even in scenario writing?

**A.** Yes. It is like this. On the stage, for instance, a character comes in, who is supposed to be a ruffian. He comes in and perhaps by using a few swear words he gives you the impression that he is a brute. He is able to show that by the language he uses. But in the cinema he cannot do that. The handling of it is different. The scenario writer thinks out how he will make the man look brutal. He gets an idea. He finds there is a dog sleeping on the side of his house. The man goes into his room, comes out, and kicks it. Would not that strike any man as brutal? That is the way in which he has to think out.

**Q.** The standard of training which you have in mind in these matters can never be attained in a Government studio?

**A.** Impossible. You can get knowledge only from those who have it.

*Chairman:* And who practise it?

**A.** Yes.

**Mr. Neogy:** You approve of the idea of Government having a studio for the production of their own films?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** You are also anxious that Government should do something to aid the industry. Would not one useful way of aiding the industry be to entrust the private producer with the production of Government films? Supposing Government entrusted the work to private producers, would not that very fact enable the private producer to attract more capital to his business? Would you advocate that kind of help?

**A.** But I do not think he will get the necessary advertisement.

**Q.** That class of work may not give the necessary advertisement to the producer, but he will be assured of a modest income and on the strength of that he may undertake the production of Indian films.

**A.** That is quite possible.

**Q.** That will be one way of aiding the industry?

A. Yes.

Q. And that will be a useful way?

A. It will be helpful.

Q. From that point of view, a Government studio would not be helpful to the industry?

A. It would not be of much help to the industry, it will be of more help to itself.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* You speak very good English. You have been educated abroad?

A. No. I was educated here.

Q. You had little difficulty in getting employment in America owing to your features. If a darker person goes from India to America you think there will be no jealousy shown by the Americans in respect of their trade secrets?

A. I do not think so.

Q. We were told by an America-returned gentleman in Bombay that he found that that was so.

A. It is a difficult question to answer, because, after all, I have only my experience to go upon.

Q. Students are not allowed to work in the way they were allowed to before. They were allowed to work their way when they were studying in the colleges. Now they have stopped it.

A. Yes.

Q. It is useless to send boys there to learn, is it not better to teach them here?

A. I do not think you can teach them here in five years what they can learn there in a year. There is too much to be learnt on the spot. It is what you see that gives you the instruction.

Q. Did you try to float a company in America for making Indian pictures?

A. No. I came back to India because I heard in 1921 that the Famous Players Lasky Corporation were going to combine with a very big firm here to make big pictures on a large scale in Bombay. Instead of being an ordinary actor I thought I could do more here because I had influence in India. Besides, having had experience in America it would not take me long to get into the line. I heard that the Famous Players were going to combine with a firm called E. D. Sassoon and Co. who are big people in Bombay. They made an attempt in Bombay, and the man who came out wrote back to America saying that a big company would not be paying in India because the only advantage they have in India is the natural scenery but every other thing is a disadvantage to producing big pictures. That advantage of natural scenery—they could produce that artificially in America. So there was nothing much to gain.

Q. You were in England?

A. Yes.

Q. You have been here for 4 or 5 years?

A. Yes.

Q. You must have read in the papers that there was a great deal of agitation to start making British films in England. Was not your attention drawn to it when you were not pulling on well here?

A. I am doing all right in the line. The only thing is I have not been successful in floating a cinema company. But I am doing good business.

Q. How much will it cost you to produce one picture of the kind you have in mind?

A. It is going to be only 2 reels and it won't cost me more than 7,000 or 8,000 rupees.

Q. 4 reels would cost you Rs. 15,000?

A. Yes, possibly.



**Q.** 12 reels will cost Rs. 50,000?

**A.** It all depends. I do not think I shall be able to make 12 reels in the next three years.

**Q.** Did you advertise yourself that you were in need of some help?

**A.** No.

**Q.** Or you intended starting a company?

**A.** No.

**Q.** Did you see any producing companies here?

**A.** I went once or twice to Madans. I asked Madans once if I could use their studio and what they would charge for the production of one picture as an experiment. I could not afford to pay them what they wanted. They wanted a big sum.

**Q.** There are other producing companies here.

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** They might have helped you if you had seen them, and you might have helped them too. That would have been of great help.

**Written Statement of Mr. N. C. LAHARRY, Manager and Secretary, Globe Theatres, Limited of India, Burma and Ceylon, dated the 12th December 1927.**

**INTRODUCTORY.**

1. Yes. I am acquainted with the major problems of the Cinematograph Industry in this country. My knowledge of the Cinematograph Industry arises from my connection with exhibiting, importing, distributing and producing firms in India during the past 10 years.

(i) *Distribution*.—Normally my firm supplies pictures to 30 or 35 Cinemas throughout the country every week.

(ii) *Exhibition*.—I am in charge of the Globe Grand Opera House, the Calcutta Theatre of my firm.

(iii) *Producing*.—I have myself produced three pictures 8 years ago for a firm of which I was the part owner. That firm had to be closed on account of financial difficulties.

(iv) *Importing*.—We purchase practically all our films from abroad and as such I have some first hand knowledge of the problems that Importers have to face.

**GENERAL.**

2. (a) My immediate personal experience of the actual exhibiting side is confined to Calcutta and the towns near about, but, having to supply films to various parts of India regularly, I have a fair knowledge of the composition of audiences at Cinemas throughout the country.

There are various classes of Cinema Houses in this country.

(1) First class Theatre Houses in the large cities like Calcutta, Bombay, Rangoon, etc. These are generally patronised by Europeans, Anglo-Indians, and Indians of the more educated classes.

(2) Houses showing Serials and Indian Dramas are patronised mostly by Indians including a small percentage of Indian Ladies.

(3) The same is the case with towns having a Cantonment or Civil Line and a City. The Cantonment shows Features, the City shows Serials, Action films and Serials.

(4) Amongst the educated Indians, the older generation presumably takes little interest in films. It is mostly the younger people who are interested.

(5) The illiterate classes frequent Cinemas showing Serials and Indian Drama. There is a considerable increase in patronage amongst the literate and illiterate classes where Indian pictures are concerned.

(b) Generally speaking the composition of an average Cinema House in a Theatre like the Globe during the run of any single picture would be as follows :—

40 per cent. Europeans and educated Indians, 50 per cent. Anglo-Indians, Jews and Soldiers and 10 per cent. Indians.

(c) On a liberal estimate, the proportion of children under 14 or adolescents of impressionable age would be about 5 per cent.

This varies according to the time of the year. During the cold weather when children are down from the hills, this percentage is perhaps slightly higher.

## PART I.

### *Film Industry in India.*

3. (1) Pictures with really Human themes like "Enemies of Women," "The Flag Lieutenant," "The Rat," "Les Miserables," "Quo Vadis," etc., appeal to all classes of audiences including Indians of all types, because their subject matter is of universal interest—just like the classics of Literature and the masterpieces of Art.

(2) In the absence of such pictures, the average Indian prefers to see locally-made pictures with subjects of local appeal.

(3) In the absence of (1) and (2) the average Indian prefers to see such pictures as they can easily appreciate and grasp, like "Action Pictures", and Serials, for the simple reason that in the average social dramas they are unable to understand many of the sub-titles and much of the pictorial representation depicting scenes peculiar to the West.

(4) The exhibitors do their best to cater for Indian audiences. If their efforts do not, at times, reach the mark in any direction, the reasons, to my mind, are :

(a) The difficulty of the Importers in buying pictures with a cosmopolitan or universal appeal at reasonable prices owing to certain indications of monopolistic tendencies in the Industry.

(b) The indigenous production side in Bengal, at least, has been hopelessly neglected, because financiers are averse to investing their capital in the production of pictures if the return on their outlay is to be dependent upon the terms to be dictated by theatre-owning monopolies.

(5) Indian-produced films depicting Indian life are not at present readily available to exhibitors in many parts of India.

(a) Technically, their standard cannot be said to be very high or comparable to Western productions. The difference between a Hollywood production and an Indian-made production is that between London and a small provincial town in India.

(b) But they are popular, because the audiences can understand them, because the audiences can grasp and appreciate everything that they see on the screen.

(c) In view of what I have said above, I would prefer to answer the questions as follows :—

There being two different classes of Cinema Houses it is impossible to make a comparison between such houses as show Western feature films and others which exhibit Indian-made and action pictures. If the gross takings of a Western film in a first class feature house be more than that of an Indian-made picture it must be remembered that the cost of an Indian picture and the cost of maintenance of an Indian Theatre is much less than the first.

Generally speaking in the first class feature houses there are a larger number of the higher priced seats than in the others.

(6) (a) Films dealing with Indian life would obviously be more popular with Indian audiences than the average Western pictures, but I do not think India can yet produce pictures with such an universality of appeal as would hold all classes of audiences spell-bound, such as "Enemies of Women", etc.

(b) Of such films—

- (1) Educated classes would prefer an honest straightforward drama dealing with social life or historical subjects.
- (2) The illiterate public would at first prefer plays with Gods and Goddesses and Miracles—subjects which they can readily comprehend.

7. Troops are fairly adequately catered for. A larger proportion of British Pictures, if easily available, would be more appreciated.

The average British soldier, generally speaking, prefers a good strong action drama with very little padding and titling or a good straightforward British production like "Bulldog Drummond", etc., dealing with such scenes and subjects as he is familiar with. Owing to existing production conditions in Britain it is not possible to obtain British pictures alone for the British Troops out in India. The average British soldier has no sort of liking whatsoever for the cheap jazzy pictures emanating from various places.

(8) (a) No. The present condition of the Industry in this country in its various branches of production, distribution and exhibition is not quite satisfactory.

(b) Generally speaking the Industry may be said to be in a very primitive stage of development and the country is undeveloped from the Cinema point of view. The main difficulties are:—

- (i) *Production*.—Lack of capital and enterprise and the necessary technical experience.
- (ii) *Exhibition*.—There are great difficulties for showing pictures at various stations unless the importer himself owns or controls Cinema houses. There is also the danger of "monopoly".
- (iii) *Distribution*.—(a) As there are comparatively very few Cinemas throughout the country, distributors have to experience the difficulty of having their films detained for comparatively long periods at each station owing to the intervening distances. His returns therefore are not very quick.
- (b) The Cinema Industry is Western in origin and development and Western methods must be pursued in this country if any substantial progress is to be achieved. The control, direction and management of Cinemas from *Gadis* and Stores are subversive of its growth. People must be properly trained in Western commercial principles and methods.
- (iv) *Importing*.—There exists some amount of cutthroat competition amongst some purchasers. Further, the smaller Importer experiences considerable difficulty in buying good pictures on account of the American Market, at least for the best pictures, having to a large extent, been cornered. No doubt a large number of very ordinary pictures are available but no exhibitor can run a Cinema with just these.
- (v) *Remedy*.—Very briefly speaking the country must be opened out. There must be independent Cinemas besides the monopoly network throughout the country. Each independent owner in a central town must be assisted financially or otherwise by Government in opening out shows throughout the adjoining districts. Cinemas managed by Military authorities are perhaps the best managed and conducted on sound commercial lines and principles. These should be encouraged. My firm does its best to assist these in every possible way.

9. Good films are obtainable by exhibitors at reasonable prices, but distributors of films have to be very careful as frequently films are detained and shown in stations not stipulated for as also for the heedless neglect of films.

There is a distinct tendency to monopoly in the supply and the exhibition of films which is a grave danger to the Industry generally and the independent exhibitors particularly.

All attempts to corner houses and the sources of supply should be discouraged. This has arisen from persistent efforts for cornering certain brands of production in the West and the refusal of the Americans to sell pictures except on the "block" basis. Also attempts are being made to corner Cinema Houses all over the country and freeze out the Independent Exhibitor.

10. "Block" booking exists to some little extent. But this is inevitable. If the importer-distributor is himself forced to buy in the block, he must stipulate that his customers should rent a fixed number of programmes from his firm during a given period. Otherwise all his super pictures will be taken off and the others will idle on the shelves.

*Blind Booking.*—Some firms pursue the method of forcing their clients to book whatever they offer. My experience is that better results are obtained by letting the exhibitors make their own selections.

*Key Theatres.*—Calcutta, Rangoon and Bombay which are the importing centres and where films have their *premiere*, may be said to be the towns with the Key Theatres.

11. (a) No. The importer-exhibitors have scarcely any opportunity of previewing pictures. They have to depend upon trade papers and cabled reports from middlemen.

The Industry cannot afford to have trained men with the necessary Indian experience in New York and London permanently. Without the required knowledge and experience no amount of previewing can benefit the Industry. With the further development of the Industry trained agents abroad will possibly be feasible.

(b) The ordinary small exhibitors have no opportunity of viewing the pictures when they are released in the big towns. But they have the experience of the large exhibitors to rely upon.

12. The Amusement Tax is a distinct handicap to the exhibitors inasmuch as it affects everybody. The amount which goes to Government is a negligible factor in relation to the total revenue of the State but, to each exhibitor, that amount, if saved, would mean better pictures and better service to the public and possibly better dividends for shareholders which would be an attraction for further capital.

13. Customs Tariff affects the exhibitors adversely. It is a mistake to regard the "Recreation" of a Nation as a Luxury. It is a Necessity which the State should regulate and encourage upon the proper lines.

The importer having to pay Rs. 37-8-0 for every 1,000 feet of film he imports naturally tries to realise the same from the exhibitors. Sometimes a good secondhand two reel comedy may be obtainable for about £2 and the Duty upon it works out to about double that amount. I am of opinion that if the Tariff, in a modified form, be retained, its only justification would be the utilisation of the revenue on the Industry generally and indigenous production particularly,—which is certainly in its infancy.

The indigenous market will scarcely be affected by a tariff wall against non-Indian productions.

The Duty on publicity matter is also a serious hardship and has no justification in principle.

14. Agricultural, Health and such other films would be a distinct help to the growth of the Industry in this country, specially in Bengal. If properly produced, such films would have a very great demand. Whether this is done directly by a State Agency or by Governmental encouragement or private enterprise, its effect is bound to be beneficial to the Industry as a whole.

These should be shown in educational institutions, industrial exhibitions and wherever possible at public Cinemas.

15. Conditions in this country are distinctly favourable to the development of an indigenous film producing industry on a fairly large scale. My reasons are :—

- (1) Popularity of Indian produced films with certain classes of the public.
- (2) The comparative cheapness of the productions. A fairly good picture of about 10,000 feet can be made with an expense of Rs. 30,000 more or less. Granted the necessary facilities, a production of this type should not take more than two months to complete.
- (3) Recreation being one of the primary needs of human nature this would be the finest vehicle for educating and broadening the minds of the masses and promoting Empire-fellowship upon which I lay special stress.

16. It must be made quite clear that for some little time to come feature-films produced in this country will be made only for local consumption. We are not thinking of foreign competition at all. Granting this point actors and writers are easily available. Producers and directors are gradually coming forth. Attractive remuneration will be bound to bring out talent of the producing and directing type. If there be any deficiency in the beginning it can be easily made up by employing foreign talent for a little while.

17. Capital is shy for the film producing business on account of the dread of monopolies. If there be a little Government support or guarantee behind each substantially organised concern, the necessary capital is sure to be attracted. If the exhibiting difficulty could be removed, capital would be more likely to come in.

18. Mere legislative action is not likely to be very effective. Government may help in several ways.

(1) At each Provincial Capital the Government may have its own or its guaranteed film producing concern for Educational, Agricultural and Health films. If a good producer and director be engaged he may be made to utilise a considerable portion of his time in making pictures of the recreational type like dramas, comedies, etc. There is a distinct advantage in this suggestion, because with the necessary Houses for exhibiting them, the side-films of the Educational type become automatically a marketable proposition inasmuch as they can be made to act as the programme fill-ups for the dramas produced and be charged for accordingly.

(2) Secondly, the Government may help in the raising of the capital for parties with the necessary qualifications and suitability by guaranteeing a certain amount of interest regularly for the investors.

(3) Thirdly, there should be a Chair for Cinematography in the Universities and elementary courses thereof in schools.

(4) Fourthly, there should be one or two Annual State Scholarships for students to proceed abroad for a thorough training.

19. The cost of film-production in this country compares very favourably with that in other countries in that labour is fairly cheap and technical perfection is not yet a *sine qua non*.

*Capital Expenditure.*—Roughly Rs. 40,000.

*Recurring Expenditure* estimated on the basis of six-eight reel features annually with 12 Short educationals Rs. 2,00,000.

There are at least 100 independent Cinemas in the country, returns from which should pay costs and a handsome dividend within 12 months for each picture.

20. (a) Undoubtedly Government must spend some money at the beginning but this may be recouped at a later stage. The expenditure is justifiable

because of the moral duty which rests upon every Government to prevent people from stagnating morally and physically and because of providing for the future when films will be the links of the Empire and because of its obvious obligation of helping infant industries. The Cinema is one of the mightiest educative forces of the modern world.

(b) The Customs Tariff and the Amusement Tax (including the Betting Tax) if not abolished, should certainly be used for such Governmental expenditure as detailed above.

Raise the Betting Tax, if necessary, for those adventurous souls who risk their all to court the fickle smiles of the fardy Goddess would be none the worse for their loss if it ultimately contributes to their own pleasures.

In any case, if the proposition be granted that the encouragement of healthy and educative recreation is a State duty, the conclusion is unavoidable that the money must be found by the Finance Member at Delhi. Next only to primary education should the place of mental recreation be in the State Budget.

21. A State agency for the purpose of the management of the film industry as a monopoly would not be a feasible proposition primarily on account of the question of expenditure. It would cripple private initiative and enterprise.

22. Yes.

(a) It would decidedly promote the indigenous producing industry, at first by exchanges, on a commercial basis, of industrial films and in the future on a more ambitious scale.

(b) Promote better understanding between India and the rest of the Empire and perhaps later on with other parts of the world.

(c) I am doubtful about this as at the best of times India is a comparatively small market for the American producers.

If the proposition be granted that the circulation of British films within the Empire should be encouraged, the British Government can help the British Producers in Britain and the Empire substantially. British producers should be granted a subsidy by the British Government for all exports to India so that more British pictures might sell here at prices which would be able to compete with the American Market.

I am afraid the importance of this point has not been sufficiently stressed. Without going to any politics, I may say that it is the duty of Britain and India to realise, respect and co-ordinate each other's standards and ideals. If our future progress is to be directed on Western lines it is desirable that certain peculiarly British traits of character should be striven to be adopted by us—at least to meet Britishers on the same level and footing. Ultimately Britain will also come to realise that there is some good amongst the Indians. I am of opinion that there is no more powerful method for achieving this end than through really "National" films.

Incidentally I may state that British pictures are absolutely necessary for this country if the tone of films is to be kept up and if the two countries are to understand each other and if the real English language is going to be the bond of the Empire. I affirm strongly and emphatically from personal experience that there is a strong demand for British pictures in this country. But generally their prices are high and sometimes prohibitive. What distinguishes British pictures from others are:—

- (1) The stories are really human and therefore cosmopolitan and appeal to all races. Their contrast is with the Jazzy films from other parts of the world which deal with certain peculiar social customs and habits which the average Indian does not understand.
- (2) Britain has her great mass of literature to fall back upon. Some of the best American pictures are based upon the products of the British brain. Some of America's best producers and Stars are British.

- (3) In certain directions, British Productions stand unchallenged, *e.g.*, the sporting film and the recent War dramas. These have a particularly healthy tone and educative effect.

*Methods.*—First, exchange of Industrial and Educational films and compulsory exhibition of a certain percentage by all Cinemas, all over the Empire. Later on—exchanges on a more ambitious scale.

23. This would be a very desirable end if Government could help, at first in helping towards the provision for their exhibition. Generally speaking the average man comes to the pictures for recreation and does not bother about educational or similar films and as such the exhibitor scarcely bothers about them.

But if legislation is made all over the Empire that there should be exchanges of such pictures between the various countries and that each Cinema must show a certain number of feet of such films every month some results may be obtained.

Cinemas may also be started in connection with educational institutions which would help greatly.

## PART II.

24. (a) As a rule, no—but occasionally there are pictures which go beyond the border line. Much more so than the others, British films are free from this danger.

(b) Not that I know of.

(c) The lurid sex pictures are harmful. They are harmful to every human being for obvious reasons. Films like "Foolish Wives" should never be permitted to be shown in any decent civilised country.

Films with inflammatory subjects are objectionable.

Films with racial questions are also objectionable.

Films treating Royalty with disrespect are objectionable.

(d) Censorship, as it exists, is, in my view, more than adequate. No special provision is required with regard to "Sex" films and "Crime" films as every reasonable member of any Board can judge whether they are objectionable or not.

I believe the censoring bodies should be constituted on a different basis. It should be more public and less official. The views of public bodies should be frequently invited and importers and exhibitors should be made to feel that their co-operation is sought for and appreciated. On the whole Censorship should be relaxed to some extent at least in the big cities, to give the Industry a chance to work out its own destiny. Public opinion may be relied upon to pronounce its final verdict.

(e) No. If such a theory was acceptable, crime in all forms would be rampant among members of all communities in all countries.

25. India being a country with a variety and diversity in social customs amongst her own millions is fully able to appreciate the natural social differences existing in the Western races.

The one point I lay stress on is that the womanhood of no country must be allowed to be debased or misrepresented in films or elsewhere. It is certainly permissible to show evil as evil and harmful to the best interests of the human race provided the contrast of the corresponding good is also shown. If the exhibition of all evil was prohibited there would be no drama, for drama results from the arousing of human interest out of the clash of good and evil. If things are shown in their proper proportion and from their proper perspective there could never be any objection.

26. Sufficient care is already exercised. My information is that some-time ago a film called "The Life of Lord Buddha" has been objected to in Burma and Ceylon.

27. No. People have a habit of confusing films and certain incidents therein. Occasionally there are films with incidents which may not be quite unexceptionable.

Uneducated Indians take scarcely any interest in ordinary social films because they cannot follow the drama and cannot understand the titles. Indians of the less literate classes generally patronise Indian films, action dramas and serials.

If there be any customs liable to misinterpretation it is better that they should be seen and openly discussed and right conclusions arrived at rather than people should be allowed to be swayed by vague and blind rumours.

It is an insult to our intelligence and an affront to our moral instincts to be continually alleging that Indians can see nothing but evil in a pair of dainty, tripping ankles and nothing but the devil himself in arms that may be undraped. The average Indian is neither prurient in mind nor putrid in thought. The Savitris and Sitas of old still inspire his thoughts and ideals.

28. (a) Generally no. Parents and guardians and Cinema-owners are far too careful of their own interests to show films which may be taken exception to.

(b) Certain types of pictures have a bad effect on adolescents.

The English language in such pictures, however effective it may be in non-British countries, is being perverted. The Cinema-loving public is being glutted with certain deleterious ideas like "Bootleg Booze", etc.

29. No. For the simple reason that the public would think that there was something radically wrong with such pictures and the better classes would keep away.

30. No.

31. There must be some form of censorship for films and if the governing authorities are constituted on the proper basis no further measures are required.

32. I am inclined to believe that the censorship in Bengal is a bit on the strict side, e.g., "The Triumph of the Rat".

*Defects:—*

- (1) There should be a little more definiteness in the application of certain fundamental principles. The term "Low moral tone" for instance is very vague and elastic. If a film like "The Rat" could have been certified and received well by the public all over India, the characterisation of "The Triumph of the Rat" as a picture with a "Low moral tone" is difficult to understand especially in view of the fact that the last-named picture has been certified by Bombay.
- (2) Sometimes a picture is duly certified, then on the complaint of some individual member of the public it is banned or mutilated during its actual run.
- (3) A tendency to concentrate on the worst side of life and ignore the broad general aspect.
- (4) The censoring body should be a non-official public body with representatives of the Industry on the Board, with a nominee on behalf of the Government.
- (5) Lack of co-operation between the Industry and the Board. It was only after the banning of "The Triumph of the Rat" that I succeeded in getting the local censors to admit this and to invite the representatives of the Industry before the Board at their meetings.

This by itself is very ineffective. For unless the importers are treated with some more confidence by the Board and allowed to participate in their deliberations, the public and the Industry will be the losers.



33. Yes.

34. No. The Industry will lose very much by this. Also the Central Board would have to be situated obviously in Delhi. In other words it would be away from the current of thought in Calcutta and Rangoon and Bombay (the importing centres).

Further, the absence of personal contact between the Board and the Industry would give rise to delays and other difficulties.

There should be a Central Board for appeals. The duty of this Board should be primarily to co-ordinate the decisions of the various Provincial Boards.

*Question of Finance.*—The expense of a mere appellate body would be very little and could be easily found by the Government of India.

35. I believe the present constitution of the Provincial Boards is capable of improvement. Although half the members are non-officials some are selected by the Local Government from official institutions.

I think a fair arrangement would be to have:—

- (1) A representative from the European Association.
- (2) Two prominent Indian public men—Hindu and Mohammaden.
- (3) A representative of the Local Government.
- (4) A representative of the Corporation.
- (5) A lady member.
- (6) Two representatives from the Industry.
- (7) A non-official Chairman to be appointed by H. E. The Governor.
- (8) The Commissioner of Police *ex-officio*.

There should be a whole-time Inspector who will act as the Secretary to the Board.

The Board must meet at least once a week to review the activities of the Industry and get into personal touch with members of the Industry in order to have first-hand acquaintance with all the problems that affect the trade.

This no doubt will require more expenditure but Government will have to find the necessary money either from the Customs or Entertainments and Betting Taxes or other sources of revenue, as the encouragement of healthy recreation for the public is one of the duties of Government. It must be remembered that in raising the money the Industry must not be hampered more than it is to-day as otherwise the sources of supply will deteriorate.

36. (a) The system of having a whole-time Inspector is quite satisfactory, provided the principle of employing a broad-minded man, of fairly good social standing, be strictly adhered to.

The absence of broad-mindedness in the Inspector leads to having ordinary comics containing nothing but innocent fun cut and clipped to the point of destruction.

The Inspector must be well remunerated and must devote his whole time to his work.

*Qualifications.*—Good general education, broad-mindedness. If an Indian is appointed he must have first-hand information of Western habits and culture.

(b) No.

37. (a) Generally speaking some respect must be paid in principle to the sense of honour of the exhibitor.

(b) Specifically, adequate safeguard is provided for in the practice that prevails here of having to send to the Local Board either the original certificate or a cutting from the trailer of any picture proposed to be shown here which has been censored by another Board. The Board has the option of viewing the picture again if they be not satisfied.

(c) Some safeguard would be required for stations situated in the interior far away from the Board. This may be done by local authorities insisting

on a cutting from the trailer. If there be any doubt they should postpone the exhibition and refer the matter to the Board.

38. Yes, "The Triumph of the Rat" banned by Calcutta and certified by Bombay with slight cuts.

39. "Foolish Wives" was disapproved of in Great Britain.

40. No. The exhibitors should be asked to exercise their own discretion in the matter. If not, they would come under the Criminal Law of the country either in the matter of transgressing the limits of decency or on racial questions.

It must be clearly remembered that all publicity matter is sent out with picture and importers have no discretion in the matter.

So far as the letterpress of local advertisements is concerned two points must be remembered:—

(1) The exhibitor if he wants to draw decent people to his show must be dignified in his advertisements. He cannot afford to sin against the canons of good taste.

(2) Differences in opinions re meaning of words and phrases in advertisements are likely to lead to constant conflict. *E.g.*, The word "ravishing" when used in conjunction with the word "beauty" has the whole of English literature behind it to support its use. But still exception has been taken to it. The word "desire" has been taken exception to in some films and permitted in others.

The Press Act is sufficient for this purpose.

Advertisements are only objectionable when they attempt to mislead the public.

41. The moral standard of the pictures produced in Great Britain are generally of a high order.

During recent years the tone has certainly improved. The era of jazzdom with its ostentatious parade of semi-nude damsels is a matter of the past.

42. I have referred to this specifically in previous paras. If I may repeat once again, the co-operation of the Trade is most essential. Personal contact and an effort to understand one another's difficulties are necessary.

Also, representatives of at least two big firms must be made members of the Board.

43. None, and none is really possible for there may be means of evading the Law.

44. The public is ultimately the final judges where all films are concerned and it is their opinion which should really count. No exhibitor can afford to disregard public views in any matter at all.

That theory is a slander on human nature which alleges that people go to Cinemas to see pictures which are bad or on the border line.

Public opinion expresses itself definitely whenever there is any occasion for it.

The press is an effective instrument for maintaining a good standard where films are concerned.

The *Statesman* of Calcutta absolutely refuses to publish any blocks which in their opinion may be found objectionable.

45. (a) The producing portion of the Industry is now practically in the womb. I cannot say what its future is going to be. If there is too much controlling things may look dark. At this stage producers should be left alone to work out their own future.

Government assistance in the way—

(1) of having a quota wherever possible,

(2) of giving financial assistance in some form or other.

(3) of giving orders to local firms for producing industrial and educational films,

would be of great help. i

(b) Registration and licensing may be left to a later period.

**Oral Evidence of Mr. N. C. LAHARRY, General Secretary and Manager, Globe Theatres, Limited, of India, Burma and Ceylon, on Saturday, the 17th December 1927.**

*Chairman:* Mr. Laharry, you are the manager of the Globe Theatre?

A. Yes.

Q. How long have you been manager of the Globe?

A. Since its beginning in 1922. Before that I was connected with this business in the producing line and also with Messrs. Madans for a little while.

Q. You are acquainted with the industry in all its branches?

A. Yes, the major branches of it.

Q. Exhibition, importation, distribution?

A. Yes.

Q. And producing also?

A. Producing to some extent. I was the first Bengali to produce pictures in Bengal.

Q. When was that?

A. In the year 1920-21.

Q. What was the firm known as?

A. The Indo-British Film Company.

Q. How many years did it work for?

A. 1½ years.

Q. It closed on account of financial difficulties?

A. Financial difficulties to some extent—interval differences, lack of business ability.

Q. How many films did they produce?

A. I was the producer myself and I produced three films.

Q. What experience had you of production before you embarked on it.

A. I was associated with Messrs. Madan from my childhood. I was in school with the boys; and when they started their producing I used to write the scenarios for them.

Q. Just by practice?

A. Yes; and then when they started their limited company I joined their firm and did a little producing work; and then on account of personal differences I left their firm.

Q. Now the Globe has got a circuit?

A. Yes.

Q. How many theatres do you control.

A. We own 5 or 6 ourselves throughout Indian and Burma (not Ceylon) and we have a circuit of 35 or 36 theatres where we supply regular programmes weekly. Then there are stray programmes here and there that we supply, I am not taking that into consideration.

Q. And how many theatres do Madan's control?

A. I think altogether about 90.

Q. You control about 35?

A. About that.

Q. Is there any other circuit that you know of?

A. There is Pathe's, and the Universal.

Q. Pathe is different from Universal?

A. Yes.

Q. And what is Pathe's circuit?

A. I don't know; I could not give you the exact figure, but a fair number. The Universal supplies a large number of cheaper theatres all over the country. They are only suppliers.

Q. They don't control in the same way that you do or Madan's does?

A. Well, we don't control, we don't prohibit anybody else from showing pictures at the theatres where we show. We only supply one programme a week or one programme in 2 weeks—that is all.

Q. But I mean do people who take pictures from you, do they show other pictures taken from others?

A. Oh! yes, in every case.

Q. So also those who deal with Madan?

A. Well, I believe so, to some extent. My information is they are in absolute association with some of them, and that they take pictures from Madan exclusively.

Q. Now how many pictures do you import yourself?

A. Features about 60 to 70 a year; and there are short subjects like comedies, side films, interest films, then the topical ones every week.

Q. You import both British and American pictures?

A. I have worked out the proportion for you. During the last 5 years, since we started in Calcutta, 1922, we have shown about 100 British pictures, including about 5 or 6 Continental pictures, so that roughly it will be 20 a year, features.

Q. Let us have it for the last year.

A. Last year I have shown altogether 25 British, including 2 German and French pictures.

Q. You mean German and French pictures, in which the British had purchased the interest.

A. Yes, it was through British firms we purchased them.

Q. They purchased the rights, I suppose, from the Continent. For instance "The Blue Danube" was produced in Austria and then the rights were purchased by the British?

A. My information, from what I can understand from the trade, is that some of it was produced by Graham Wilcox.

Q. So it was a joint effort of British and Austrian, and the rights are British.

A. For this territory at least, and Britain.

A. How many American films did you import last year?

A. We imported about 15 to 20. We hired a few from Pathe's.

Q. So you have exhibited more British pictures than American during the last year.

A. A little less British pictures, because if you take 52 pictures for the year and if I have shown 25 British and Continental, the balance is 27. It will be more or less fifty, because there are three weeks in the year when we only revise old pictures, Easter week, Puja week and X'mas week.

Q. Now, how many of the 35 theatres you control are high class theatres.

A. Calcutta, Bangalore, Rangoon; until recently we have had no show in Bombay but we are having a show in Bombay early in January; then Allahabad is a high class show, Jhansi is a good high class show.

Q. You do not answer my question. How many of the 35 theatres would you class as high class?

A. You mean key theatres? I would say only Calcutta, Bombay, Rangoon and Colombo. The rest are second class.

Q. Have you got a list of all the theatres in India more or less roughly? How many do you compute there are?

A. According to my calculation there will be about 250 working ones; there are more but some of them are not actually working.

Q. They do not show pictures continuously, they work off and on?

A. 200 would be a very safe figure for the really paying concerns.

Q. Our information is there are 350 licensed houses in India.

A. But most of them do not work, or if they do work, I do not know where they get their pictures from. They must be thrown away pictures, second hand pictures.

Q. What do you mean?

A. Well, sometimes pictures get very worn out. They are taken for travelling cinema shows.

Q. Do you hold sales for such pictures every year?

A. No. Parties come to us with requests when we have second-hand films the rights of which we can sub-lease to them.

Q. How many do you sell like that per annum?

A. Not many. They are all used up films which we cannot show in first or second class houses.

Q. But still they are shown in the interior?

A. Yes. They are very hurtful to the eyes, very injurious.

Q. Do you think such films ought to be allowed to be shown?

A. Well, they are trying to make a living for themselves.

Q. At the cost of the public.

A. If the public do not object themselves?

Q. How many such circulating or travelling cinemas are there in this province, do you know?

A. I heard in evidence the other day by one of the leading travelling cinemas that there are 20. I don't think there are more than about 10 or 15.

Q. With their headquarters in Calcutta?

A. Yes.

Q. How do they show when they go into the interior? Do they use houses there or carry their own tents?

A. Sometimes there are open air shows. Sometimes they put up some sort of a canopy. Tents are very expensive.

Q. Probably they also use the cinema houses in these parts?

A. Very few.

Q. If according to your computation only 200 are used regularly, the other 150 may be used by these travelling people.

A. That is quite possible. But if there are any actual cinemas going within a reasonable distance of Calcutta we would have some information because we control a large number of films for India and they would come to us for hiring them.

Q. So there are in India only 4 distributing agencies for foreign films, are there not? Madans, Yourself, Pathe and Universal?

A. In Karachi I think there is the Capital Bioscope Company who are doing a little distributing business also.

Q. We did not hear much of it there.

A. I say so because they offered us one or two pictures. In Bangalore there is a firm. It also goes by the name of Universal Pictures or Film Company. They have got a few of the Columbia productions of America. There is another one, the Alliance Trades Agency.

**Q.** Do they do much business? Where is their headquarters?

**A.** In Calcutta.

**Q.** Who is their representative?

**A.** Their representative is a gentleman known as Mr. Krishen Das.

**Q.** We have not heard of him here.

**A.** He was with the old K. D. Bros. of Bombay before, so I suppose he does not want to come and give evidence before the Committee here.

**Q.** How many films do they import? Do they do much business?

**A.** Considering that they have got to rely to a very great extent upon the smaller theatres they cannot import very many—at the very most 15 or 20.

**Q.** Altogether how many foreign films come into the country, do you know, have you made any calculation?

**A.** I have tried to get the figures but it is very difficult to get them. All that I can get is some information from the Bengal Censor's report. Last year they said 657 films were censored by them. Then the Bombay figures are difficult for me to get. Universal and Pathe have their headquarters in Bombay and Madan imports a few films through Bombay. We import no films through Bombay, but 90 per cent. through Calcutta and 10 per cent. through Rangoon.

**Q.** Now what do you think will be the effect on the trade supposing all foreign films were compelled to come through one port?

**A.** It will make it rather difficult for us. I have my head office in Calcutta, all my banking arrangements are in Calcutta, therefore if I have to transfer my head office it will be a duplication of my establishment and it will be difficult for me to create new business connections with banks or to get the necessary facilities.

**Q.** And you think it will work as a hardship on the trade?

**A.** I think so.

**Q.** At present do they come direct or through Bombay—your films?

**A.** Direct to Calcutta or Rangoon

**Q.** Not *via* the port of Bombay by train?

**A.** Sometimes, when a film is rather important, such as a Grand National Racing film which we want urgently, we get it by post.

**Q.** American films, do they come from England or do they come independently?

**A.** Our American films in 99 per cent. of the cases come independently, direct from America.

**Q.** Is that also the case with other people, do you think?

**A.** I think generally speaking that is the case, because it would be double expense to go to London and then come here. But in the case of Continental pictures we get them through London. We get them re-edited in London.

**Q.** There are very few I suppose?

**A.** Very few.

**Q.** You take very few continental pictures, any of you?

**A.** There is one big Continental Company, the Ufa Company in Berlin. They are adopting the same block system as in America and we are shut out. They want huge prices and they want us to take all their productions. If you take one big picture like "Variety" you have got to take 15, 16 or 18 others.

**Q.** Do you know whether this film "Variety" was shown in London?

**A.** It was released first in America by the name of "Variety"; then it was trade shown in Great Britain, but I do not think it has had a regular show yet.

**Q.** It was released early in 1926?

A. Yes.

Q. And was it shown or was it not shown? It was reviewed in the trade journals?

A. Yes.

Q. What is this contest which was held by the trade to secure the first ten pictures of 1926 in which "Variety" took the first place?

A. That was a trade contest. I would not place so much reliance on that. It is more an advertisement than anything else, like the beauty competitions they have there.

Q. So this was considered the best for 1926, and "Ben Hur" came next?

A. Yes.

Q. Has it been reviewed in any English journal?

A. I think it was, in the Kinematograph Weekly to the best of my recollection.

Q. Do you know whether it met with approval in England?

A. The spectacular or production part of it was spoken a lot of. It has been criticised adversely in some places.

Q. What are the films which were passed in Britain which have been banned in this country, do you know?

A. I am responsible for two. The first was Stohl's "Chinese Bungalow" which was banned here by the Calcutta Board of Censors. The other was the "The Eleventh Commandment" which was also banned.

Q. Both British pictures?

A. Oh! yes.

Q. Banned on moral grounds?

A. Well, the story of "The Eleventh Commandment" is that of a girl belonging to a high English aristocratic family who carries on with a man and when it is found out that she is carrying on an illicit affair she puts the blame on her sister.

Q. Was it banned on moral grounds?

A. On moral grounds. The picture was passed on moral grounds by the British Board of Censors.

Q. That is one, which is the other?

A. The other was "Chinese Bungalow".

Q. Was that also passed by the British Censors?

A. Yes. It was banned on racial grounds in Calcutta, on the ground that the vexed question of marriages between races was involved and also because two English people are shown in a not particularly good light.

Mr. Neogy: Was that a British production?

A. Pure British production—Stohl's.

Chairman: And "The Triumph of the Rat" was also banned?

A. Also banned in spite of strong protests.

Q. Was it shown in England? Did you notice the question in the House of Commons yesterday about the banning of films in this country which had been passed in Britain?

A. I did not. What was the purport of it?

Q. Some question was put asking if the Secretary of State was aware that films passed in England are banned in India. Lord Winterton defended such action on the ground that it might be due to communal reasons. Probably he was not aware that it was banned on moral grounds.

A. There is nothing communal. So far as "Chinese Bungalow" is concerned I agree that the film should not be shown because it does raise the vexed question of race and it does show a certain race and its women not in a good light. My remarks do not apply to the "Triumph of the Rat".

**Q.** Now, as regards "The Triumph of the Rat", you were responsible for its being presented here for censoring?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** And did you take it also to Bombay for being censored?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** What was your object in taking it to Bombay.

**A.** I will tell you what the real object was. If we buy an expensive picture, unless we can show it in the 3 big towns our costs are not met, the smaller cinemas do not pay us at all. If a film is banned at Calcutta it is useless to us. When we write to the London people, they say: unless you can get a certificate of banning from the whole of your territory we cannot consider the question of replacing that picture. So we had no other alternative but to send this film to Bombay with the full correspondence that I had had with the Board here as well as with the Government of Bengal, placed the whole thing before them, hoping that perhaps that both Boards might act together and give a decision or do what they thought best.

**Q.** And you reproduced the film in the same condition as it was here.

**A.** Yes, except one title which I have taken out. That title was "I will have that girl in my arms within a month" or something to that effect. I changed that into "I will marry that girl within a month" (in effect).

**Q.** But a definite statement made was that it was 2,000 feet less than what was shown in Bengal?

**A.** I will explain that. The Calcutta application was for 8,452 feet.

**Q.** You did not get your certificate, you mean when you applied for it?

**A.** Yes.

**Mr. Green:** Had you cut out anything before that, had you edited it at all?

**A.** Nothing, except the one title which I cut out.

**Chairman:** You cut it out in Bengal?

**A.** Only for Bombay. I cut it out and replaced it by another.

**Q.** And for Bengal you produced it in the same condition as you got it from Great Britain?

**A.** Yes; and at Bombay when I produced it they gave me a certificate for 7,452 feet. They cut out 60 or 70 feet on which I had paid customs duty. The original invoice does not show the footage at all. We get the length of the film from the original invoice because footage is charged upon that. I paid customs duty and put down 8,400 feet. Subsequently, when I saw Sir Charles Tegart's remark about the discrepancy, I found that the advance trailer of the film was included in the consignment and they weighed both together and charged us for 8,506 feet on that basis.

**Q.** What do you mean by trailer?

**A.** Little portions of film sent to us for advertisement purposes.

**Q.** That had been removed?

**A.** No, it was not removed. They were put together and in the customs it was not stated that they had charged for the total footage. The customs came to Rs. 322.

**Mr. Green:** Who assessed it?

**A.** Calcutta.

**Q.** You say it must have been weighed. Is it not actually measured?

**A.** No, it is weighed when the actual footage is unobtainable otherwise.

**Q.** And then they assess on that basis?

**A.** I asked Sir Charles myself yesterday to give you a certificate that I have not taken out one bit of the film, if you will kindly ask him.

**Q.** Did you measure the film yourself?



A. No.

Q. You had to state the length when you had to put it up for censorship?

A. Yes.

Q. Can you explain how it is that I have very distinctly in mind the fact that when the film was produced in Bengal it measured nearly 9,000 feet.

A. 8,452 feet. On your own certificate, I can show you.

Q. You assure us that no material portion of the film was cut out?

A. Personally I give you my word of honour that I have not nor any of my staff taken out any of it except one title.

Chairman: The material portion was exhibited in Calcutta and also exhibited in the same way in Bombay?

A. There was a mistake in the footage and I think it was my mistake owing to taking that customs figure without examination.

Q. But in the Bombay certificate the length was given to you. When the film was certified, they gave you the length.

Mr. Green: I understand it was very carefully measured.

A. You measured it. It was 7,452 or thereabout.

Chairman: Very well, let us have the figure in due course.

A. I have sent for it.

Q. You say it was shown in England not only to the trade but also to the public.

A. Yes.

Q. How many months run had it before it came here?

A. I don't know exactly, but my information is that it ran well.

Q. And there was no criticism in England?

A. After the banning here it roused criticism in England because I received a cutting from a paper called the *Cinema* in which they condemned the action of the Board in banning a picture of that sort.

Q. And you say "The Rat" and "The Triumph of the Rat" are of the same level?

A. "The Triumph of the Rat" is of a higher level.

Q. By whom was "The Rat" passed?

A. By the Calcutta Board.

Q. It was also a British film?

A. Yes.

Mr. Coatman: It was also passed by the English film Board?

A. Yes.

Chairman: And is "The Triumph of the Rat" a continuation of that story or what?

A. Yes, it is a sequel to that story.

Q. And have you got the story of "The Rat"?

A. Not here, but I can let you have it. The same star, Ivor Novello, figured in both. "The Rat" was one of the very few British pictures which ran for 2 weeks in Calcutta.

Q. Is that the longest run that a British picture has had here?

A. No. "The Flag Lieutenant" ran recently for 3 weeks in Calcutta.

Q. And "The Flag Lieutenant" is a later production?

A. It is a 1926 production.

Q. Now, I see from your statement you say that in British pictures the moral tone is better than in American pictures.

A. Yes, that is my firm opinion about the matter.

Q. Do they deal with underworld life?

A. Sometimes.

**Q.** What is the marked difference you note in their treatment of under-world life? I suppose they show drinking scenes?

**A.** Well, a little bit of drinking is common, so long as it does not exceed the limit, and so long as the dancing does not assume a lurid aspect. The marked difference lies in the restraint and sobriety exercised in British pictures.

**Q.** So far as nudity goes, do you find much difference? Say in point of exposure of the breast and so on?

**A.** Some difference.

**Q.** Is it a recent improvement or has it been right through?

**A.** It has been right through, because, generally speaking, British producers take up well known stage dramas, and those do not go beyond the border line of decency.

**Q.** From your point of view you consider that the British pictures have a good moral tone?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Do you consider that "The Triumph of the Rat" is superior to the American production so far as moral tone and mode of presenting under-world scenes and other things are concerned?

**A.** Picture for picture of the same class, I say yes. It is very restrained.

**Q.** I saw in the "Englishman" this morning that an American tourist, a member of an organization, rose in a London audience and objected to a girl dancing with bare legs without any stockings on and that the audience sent him out. They cheered the dancer over and over again. That shows the American tourist is now invading England. They have an organization, it seems, in order to introduce pure methods of dancing.

**A.** It is like Pussyfoot Johnson.

**Q.** Do you think the exhibitors have any difficulty in getting pictures in this country?

**A.** Not generally.

**Q.** Suppose they are not in your circuit, do they find much difficulty in running their shows?

**A.** They go to Universal's.

**Q.** Do you think there is sufficient competition between distributors?

**A.** There is a fair amount of competition amongst independent exhibitors, but most of the work is done by Madans.

**Q.** Your two answers seem to require some explanation. You say there is a fair amount of competition and at the same time you also say that most of the distribution is in the hands of Madans. That certainly requires some explanation?

**A.** Madans have got about 50 or 60 theatres of their own, there are also about 40 others which are running in association with Madans. Obviously they control most of the cinemas in the country and whatever is left over is left for the rest of the Indian market, and they compete among themselves.

**Q.** According to you, there are only 200 theatres running continuously and the others are merely occasional shows?

**A.** But the Universal Co. supplies a large number of theatres, and their prices are also very cheap. Their action pictures are very popular among certain classes of people, like the military people, the illiterate Indian public and others.

**Q.** You mean they don't like social dramas and other things?

**A.** Unless the scene is very cosmopolitan. The average jazzy drama has absolutely no effect on such classes of people, and they don't go to see them.

**Q.** On the other hand, they go to Indian dramas and action pictures?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** I suppose the educated Indian cares for those jazzy social dramas?

**A.** To some extent.

**Q.** Do you think such dramas have any effect on the people?

**A.** No, certainly not.

**Q.** Do you think it is far better to learn what there is to learn rather than to shut it out altogether? Have you travelled in the west?

**A.** No, but that is my experience.

**Q.** Is that your fear that if they don't get these social dramas, they will go elsewhere and spoil themselves?

**A.** I don't look at it from that point of view. If a man is evil by nature, he will be bad always, and he won't require books, pictures or novels to make him bad. This particular calumny about the evil effect of the cinema, that it is responsible for lowering the British prestige in India, has been directed by some interested parties.

**Q.** Why do you say that they have started this cry?

**A.** I think about two years ago I saw an article in the *Kinematograph Weekly* by an *ex-Inspector* of the Calcutta Board, and I think this cry started practically since then.

**Q.** Why have they started this cry? Have they got any motive behind it?

**A.** It is a confusion of politics with films.

**Q.** Is it more on political grounds, that India should not know too much of the west?

**A.** I don't think there is anything to be concealed. But there can be no foundation for that agitation. These pictures have absolutely no effect on an average Indian.

**Q.** But on those who are accustomed to see the cinemas every day it may not have any effect, but on those who see the cinemas, say, half a dozen times, it is likely to have a bad effect; is it not?

**A.** What are the instances you relate, Sir, may I know.

**Q.** Say dancing, kissing and so forth?

**A.** My European friends will not tell me that kissing does not exist among Indians.

**Q.** It does not exist in the way in which it is shown on the screen?

**A.** That is the custom of the country. For instance, I eat with my fingers, whereas my European friends will eat with a knife and a fork. You may just as well laugh at me.

**Q.** But do you believe that what is depicted on the screen is what they generally do?

**A.** Yes, I do believe in the representative portions, not the abnormalities. Misrepresentations, as such, should be cut out and severely censored.

**Q.** I don't think in actual life English girls get upon the table and drink and do all sorts of things.

**A.** I personally object to women being shown in such colours.

**Mr. Green:** The Chairman thought that you said that is what is happening in actual life in the west?

**A.** That does not happen.

**Mr. Neogy:** Do Indians take those pictures to represent normal English life?

**A.** They can just as well go to theatres and see the scenes there; they don't take them as representing the normal life.

**Chairman:** At any rate, the educated Indians are not likely to take them as representing the normal life of the west and the uneducated do not visit such theatres. Now, would it not create a desire in young impressionable minds to do likewise?

A. Where will they get the material to go to?

Q. Have they not started any cabarets in Calcutta?

A. No, not to my knowledge.

Q. Have you heard of any clubs or cabarets started in Calcutta at all where they could imitate the drinking scenes and other things that they see on the screen?

A. No.

Mr. Green: Are there no *nautch* parties in Calcutta?

A. There are in certain parts of the town.

Chairman: On account of the influence of the cinema, there is a possible danger of people of wealthy families starting night clubs where they can do all these things. You don't think there is a risk that sons of rich zemindars, members of the permanently settled estates, and scions of rich families having seen the cinemas, are likely to start such night clubs for enjoyment if they don't exist already?

A. Westernised Indians who desire to do so can just as well go to the Grand Hotel or to Firpos and enjoy themselves, there is nothing to prevent them from doing so.

Q. Those who want to do such things do them quite openly in Firpos and in the Grand Hotel and other places?

A. But, to my knowledge, they have not started any cabarets.

Q. Supposing we abolish the bar in all cinemas, do you think it will be acceptable?

A. I don't think the European public will like it.

Q. Do you want to keep a bar for the benefit of the European public?

A. Westernised Indians also will object to its removal.

Q. What percentage of westernised Indians would care for a bar in the cinema?

A. All of them will care for it.

Q. I am very sorry to hear it. Of course, you may by all means sell aerated waters but not liquors.

A. What is the harm in selling liquors? There is no harm in taking it in moderation.

Q. You would not advocate the abolition of the bars in cinemas and you say the European public would not tolerate it?

A. Nor would the westernised Indians tolerate it.

Q. Now, you talk of the monopoly, and I do see the difficulty of Indian producers. But do you think it is a serious difficulty for Indian productions?

A. From the production point of view there is a tendency to monopoly and, speaking of Bengal and Calcutta, I think it is a bit of a difficulty.

Q. Do you mean it acts as a damper on the production? You think Indian productions have not got the same facilities for showing them in this province as they have in Bombay?

A. We have got one first class Bengali independent theatre in Bengal, and that is the Purna, and the others are controlled by people who are interested in western pictures as well as people who produce their own Indian pictures. So what is the poor exhibitor to do? Now, take the Russa Theatre in Calcutta. An independent producer comes and produce a picture called, let us say, "Transmigration". He might be trying to show it, but somebody comes and takes that picture offering him a better price for exhibition in Calcutta. His object is simply to starve out the competing cinema.

Q. What is the harm of having competition in the trade? The producer gets more, does he not?

A. You are producing your own picture, and if this fellow is honestly trying to get that picture, why do you deprive him of his bread?

**Q.** You buy it outright, is it not?

**A.** You buy the exhibition rights.

**Q.** Supposing he gets a good price without showing it anywhere? Supposing you sell that picture once and for all to a British firm. How does the producer suffer by it? You mean he is likely to be bought out by those who attempt to control the market, is that what you mean?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** You think it is not fair and there is no open field for exhibition of Indian films in Calcutta?

**A.** I don't think so.

**Q.** Why don't you show Indian pictures yourself?

**A.** I have already mentioned it in my written statement, that when we bought the Globe theatre,—it was a European theatre before,—40 per cent. of our audience was purely European, about 50 per cent. are Anglo-Indians, Jews and Military population and 10 per cent. Indians. We have continued the system. We have to cater to the requirements of our audiences.

**Q.** The other day we saw your 4 anna seats absolutely empty. Is that a normal feature?

**A.** Sometimes it is so, but it is not the normal feature. And that is the reason I have put the lowest seats at 10 per cent.

**Q.** Probably they are menials belonging to western households?

**A.** I don't think we get the menial class very much, nor do we get a large number of the illiterate class.

**Q.** I suppose your prices are a bit stiff and you have got only Re. 1, Rs. 2 and Rs. 3 seats and the lowest class is only 4 annas.

**A.** We have not got the intervening class of 8 annas.

**Q.** Therefore you jump from 4 annas to one rupee and you cannot show an Indian picture?

**A.** Not on account of the prices but on account of the audience who patronise it.

**Q.** You think an Indian picture will drive them away?

**A.** I don't think so. Personally, I have got a picture called "Sacrifice" which I propose to show shortly, and I think the European public will appreciate it, but I have not tried it yet. To my mind the standard of the Indian pictures has not been so high as to be appreciated by Europeans.

**Q.** Even so, you think that the present standard of the Indian pictures will drive away the audience?

**A.** I would not put it so strongly as all that. There will be a certain class of Europeans who will come but the others won't take any interest.

**Q.** I suppose your box receipts will suffer if Indian pictures are shown?

**A.** Yes. We must pay our expenses.

**Q.** Unless the Indian productions are improved very much in Calcutta and the subject also is carefully chosen to suit the English taste, your box receipts will go down if you show Indian picture?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Supposing the quota system which exists in England is introduced here and every exhibitor is compelled to show a certain length of Indian picture provided that picture is passed by the Central Board as fit to be shown universally, what have you to say to it?

**A.** If that applies to educational, health and agricultural films, I agree, but if it applies to dramas and comedies, I have to differ, because the final judgment must be with the exhibitor himself.

**Q.** If we leave it to the judgment of the exhibitor, we know what has happened. No exhibitor in these theatres, even if he is a producer, would care to exhibit Indian films?

A. The reason is this, if I can get Rs. 5 more from a British picture, I see no reason why I should show an Indian picture.

Q. Because you will suffer you would not show an Indian picture?

A. I have to give an explanation to my shareholders.

Q. You think such a proposition won't be acceptable to you?

A. I would not have compulsion of any kind on these picture houses.

Q. I see you complain about the tariff. Do you think that a reduction in the tariff will be conducive to the development of the Indian industry?

A. The proportion of the indigenous productions and the proportion of foreign imports is so very small that it will have absolutely no effect.

Q. What is the extent of imports and what is the extent of production in the country?

A. 670 plus 915, that is 1,600 pictures, excluding side films and topicals, it will make 2,000, and I don't think that in India we produce more than 50 films in a year.

Q. Because you get a larger quantity of foreign pictures, you don't think an increase in the import duty on those things will diminish their coming in and encourage the production of Indian pictures?

A. It won't have any appreciable effect upon the indigenous production unless and until the internal organization and other things are improved.

Q. Simultaneously with the development of internal organization for producing Indian films, if the import duty is increased, what would happen?

A. If say for instance we could produce 500 films and we find a difficulty in competing with the foreign market, I would ask the Government to treat our indigenous market as a nascent industry, but to-day we won't be justified in asking them to treat it as such.

Q. Do you think the Indian film industry should prosper?

A. Absolutely.

Q. What steps should we take in order to encourage the growth of the Indian industry?

A. May I say one word more about customs. My suggestions are that you should reduce or abolish your tariff on second hand films.

Mr. Green: How are the customs authorities to know whether they are second hand or new.

A. You can easily make out a second hand film.

Chairman: What will be the object of it? There will be lesser chance of Indian films being produced?

A. I don't think they will be able to compete.

Q. You get foreign pictures at a cheaper rate than Indian pictures and you still want to reduce or abolish the duty on them so that the country will be flooded with those cheap films and there will be less chance for Indian pictures?

A. We have not to consider the case of Indian pictures alone. Although I am an Indian, I say that we must also consider the point of view of the European public, the military population, the Indian troops and others.

Q. Which is more paramount, the 319 millions or the classes you mention?

A. All are equally paramount.

Q. You mean the man who will import second hand pictures must be encouraged further by abolishing the duty on them? In that case won't you be flooding the country with that cheap stuff and won't it be a handicap to the production of Indian pictures?

A. You won't be flooding the country. There are military cinemas which are taking new pictures. If you help the small man to import these second hand pictures he will be able to make a living out of them, and you will be indirectly helping the independent industry to fight its own battle.

Q. You don't call it an industry. Because the man will be dealing in second hand pictures?

A. But it is a business.

Mr. Green: Won't these second hand films be very indifferent ones, won't they be worn out?

A. Sometimes they are worn out.

Q. If they are so very cheap, you mean it does not matter if they worn out?

A. I mean there are many productions which may be old and which may have been shown only a few times, but still they can be shown here several times.

Chairman: You mean the Indian public will stand them?

A. A certain section of the Indian public will stand them.

Q. But you would not dare show them in your Chowringhi theatres?

A. Because I have already shown them and my rights have expired.

Q. Do you think there is a larger quantity of second hand films coming in?

A. I don't think so.

Q. Why do you advocate the abolition of the customs duty on second hand films?

A. I find there are a very large number of films which many people would like to get, they cost only £2 or £3, and it is only the customs duty which prevents them from ordering out such films. But if it were removed, they would be able to import more of those films into this country. It will be an inducement to increase the business. I want a smaller duty on second copies also.

Mr. Green: Would you agree in that case that the duty on the first copy should be higher than at present?

A. As I have said, make it 5 per cent. *ad valorem* on the whole.

Chairman: Have you any idea of producing films yourself? Have you seriously thought of embarking upon making Indian films?

A. If we could control the theatres in the key cities, we could, because it is a paying proposition.

Q. But it is not a paying proposition in the theatres which you have in mind unless you produce first class Indian productions.

A. That is so, unless we have one in the northern part of the town of Calcutta.

Q. What prevents you from having a theatre in the northern part of the town? It won't cost you much?

A. It will cost about 5 or 6 lakhs of rupees.

Q. You don't want one like the Grand Opera House, but would a theatre to suit the ordinary Indian public cost so much as all that?

A. Tastes are changing now.

Q. How much have the Purna Theatre people invested?

A. I don't think they could have spent anything under 2 or 3 lakhs.

Q. And the other one, the Empress?

A. It does not strike me as a particularly fascinating example. I have never been inside that theatre.

Q. Don't you think that a large number of small theatres will be more useful to the country than one or two big theatres like the Opera House?

A. Yes, in smaller towns; but as competition comes in, my experience is that you must give other creature comforts too to the audience.

Q. You are thinking of the audience you are catering for, but the poor people will be squatting on the floor and see, they won't require sofa seats.

boxes and so on, and if they cannot get a good seat, they would prefer to sit down?

A. As a step to build up the independent industry such cinemas may be encouraged.

Now about block booking, I want to have something from you. What is really understood in the trade by block booking? I want to have the real meaning of it.

A. By block booking the meaning in the trade is this. Say the Metro-Goldwyn Company produce this year 52 dramas, 52 comedies, and 52 topical films, they will tell you: you have got to pay so many thousand gold dollars for it and take up the whole lot. Probably they will give you a list of the productions, **which are subject to alteration. There are all sorts of provisos.** And then if you want their supply they will tell you to buy the most of it. That is block booking.

Q. That is also blind booking—both block and blind? They go together?

A. No, not necessarily. Supposing last year's productions have been already produced. I see the reviews in the trade papers, I get information from middlemen. I see how they are doing in New York, in America and Great Britain. So practically I know what the value of the picture is and what the value to my audience will be of these things. So I would not call it blind. If it relates to future, unbooked, unproduced films, then it is blind.

Q. But if the block booking relates to past productions which have already been shown to the trade it is not blind booking?

A. I don't think so—unless you think that pre-view is necessary.

Q. You know all about your picture before you take it?

A. Not all about it.

Q. Whatever is needed to be known?

A. To some extent, the main angles of the picture we know. We know who the star is and what reception it had at the trade show. But the trade show is not really an indication of what it is going to be to the public. Supposing a picture like "The Flag Lieutenant" is produced in London. It receives a tremendous ovation from the London people. I buy it up. Then a sequel to that appears. I want it. But somebody who has already heard of the success of "The Flag Lieutenant" goes and bids double the price for the sequel and buys that up. He does not know what that picture is.

Q. Still he goes by reputation. I mean the text is recent. It is not blindness really. He knows what he wants.

A. Well, it is blindness so far as the particular picture is concerned.

Q. You mean the censorship here? That is another matter. You think then that among the people trading in India there is really no such blind booking as exists in England or America?

A. Between ourselves who are the distributors and the smaller exhibitors throughout the country?

Q. Well, take that first. Between the distributors and the exhibitors.

A. Not appreciably.

Q. Although there is block booking sometimes?

A. It is like this. I want to have a permanent relation with the cinema. I want naturally to push my goods against competition. I will tell them to have two programmes or four programmes a month.

Q. In a limited form? But if a man says: Very well, I will buy what I select, probably you will charge a higher price?

A. Well, I know one particular instance but I would not generalise from that. This sort of thing has happened, that you have got to take all the pictures he imported this year, and the man did actually come to agreement and my firm bought up that theatre and we were saddled with the contract that our predecessor had entered into. But that is an individual case. It is not of general application.



**Q.** So that the Indian exhibitor knows what he is bargaining for?—knows the value more or less generally?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Is that due to the fact that the pictures which come out here come out long after they have been shown in the country of origin?

**A.** Not always.

**Q.** But generally, is there a long interval, say, 2 or 3 months, between a picture coming out to India and the picture having been shown in the country of origin?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** And by that time the exhibitor here gets to know the value of the picture?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** That is the general prevailing condition. They are also guided by such reports as appear in the newspapers?—criticisms? I mean locally here?

**A.** They have access to the trade papers in England and America.

**Q.** Who have?

**A.** The exhibitors.

**Q.** That I can understand. But you don't mean the reviews in the local press?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** But are they not supplied to the press by the producers?

**A.** Well, so far as papers like the *Statesman* and the *Englishman* are concerned, they don't take up such made-up reviews.

**Q.** Have they ever criticised any film to your knowledge?

**A.** Well, I think they have. Because, generally speaking, I don't put up such pictures as require criticism.

**Q.** But have you ever seen any criticism in the local press which takes in advertisements? The advertisement plays a large part in the paper's income.

**A.** But I think if the *Statesman* could, it would do away with the amusement advertisements because they charge much lower for them.

**Q.** But have they ever adversely criticised any of your pictures?

**A.** Well, very often this is what they have done: They have said nothing about it. They have ignored it.

**Q.** That is not an answer to my question.

**Sir H. Jaffer:** I suppose it is a question of free tickets.

**Chairman:** You don't remember any instance where the press has adversely criticised any of your films?

**A.** I cannot recollect at the moment.

**Q.** That information we also had in Bombay and other places. The statement has been made, it is very difficult to get them to prove it.

**A.** But I don't agree with the principle.

**Q.** Never mind whether you agree or not. That is a fact.

**A.** But suppose I have a picture this week and Madan has a picture this week. Madan's picture receives a fairly good review and my picture receives nothing at all. What does the public think?—that my picture is not worth anything at all.

**Q.** Your Globe has shown a picture to-day. There is not one word about it.

**A.** I think the average man would look at it like that.

**Q.** Nor would I attach much importance to the puffing up of films.

**A.** It does a lot of good.

**Q.** That is one of the questions we have to consider, whether the press is sufficiently co-operating with the public in putting down objectionable films.

A. I know this, that so far as blocks and the letter press are concerned, both the *Statesman* and the *Englishman* are very particular.

Q. You think, therefore, that this is not an evil here in this country, so as to call for any remedy?

A. Not between ourselves and the small exhibitors. But this is not the case so far as the foreign market is concerned.

Q. And what about the importer and the producer abroad?

A. There is block booking which is harming us intensely.

Q. How do you mean? You are compelled to take productions without knowing what they are?

A. Not only that. We are compelled to take more productions than we can make use of. Supposing a company comes and tells me: I have got 52 pictures, unless you take the 52, I won't give you a single one, I will give it to the opposition.

Q. Even if you make a choice and say: we will offer you better terms?

A. We have done so in many instances but the others have taken up the lot.

Q. But suppose you say: I will select 12 out of these 52 pictures and I am prepared to pay more for them. What do they say?

A. They won't give them. They say: you must take the 52 or go.

Q. I suppose it is a case where you know the 52. It is not a case of future production but of ready productions.

A. Yes, generally already produced pictures. It is not a case of blind.

Q. And they ask you to take them in a lump? They won't sell piecemeal? That is the point?

A. The disadvantage of that from the point of view of the comparatively small exhibitor is this: that I can show only 52 films in my theatre through the year and now if I show only one brand, my audience will get fed up.

Q. But the small exhibitor does not import?

A. But I am talking of people like myself who do import.

Q. We have done with the exhibitor. We are now considering the question of the importer's trouble. That is what you are now mentioning, that you are compelled to take pictures in a lump whereas you would prefer to take them piecemeal. That is your point.

A. But it is very difficult for me to dissociate myself as an exhibitor. I am both an exhibitor and an importer.

Q. But I think you said the exhibitor does not suffer.

A. I said the smaller exhibitor, so far as his relations to me as an importer are concerned, not as exhibitor.

Q. And you suffer as importer, not as exhibitor?

A. As an exhibitor obviously it follows. If I have to take the 52 where can I show the 52?

Q. But surely this practice is common in every trade, is it not?

A. No, I don't think so.

Q. Supposing a certain firm manufactures certain articles, is it not common in the trade to sell wholesale?

A. Wholesale but in limited quantities. What you can sell. Your merchant will not be forced by your programme to take what he cannot sell. He will take just what he can sell.

Q. You then want the law to interfere and declare such contracts illegal?

A. If it were possible legally block booking should be abolished.

Q. Block booking between the foreign agent and the importer in this country?

A. Yes.

Q. Offer each picture on its own merit to the public?

A. It will be a paying proposition to everybody.

Q. You think the trade will not suffer?

A. No.

Q. You won't be compelled to pay more than you are paying now?

A. Well, for individual pictures we would pay more. We would not be forced to put 20 or 30 pictures on the shelf which we cannot exhibit.

Q. But has it ever happened to you that you had to put any pictures on the shelf except when they had not been passed by the board?

A. Oh! yes. Very often, because we cannot show these pictures in Calcutta, Bombay or Rangoon. And as I submitted before, without Calcutta, Bombay and Rangoon, it is impossible to do the importing business.

Q. But have you ever put any film on the shelf?

A. By shelving I mean I don't recover my cost.

Q. But still you exhibit them in smaller centres?

A. I don't even realise half my cost.

Q. That statement of yours leads me to a point on which I thought the evidence was unanimous, that no pictures are shown in the smaller theatres which are not originally shown in the key theatres. Is that a fact?

A. That is absolutely a fact.

Q. There was some suspicion at one time that pictures are sent out into the remote interior without being exhibited in the towns and therefore this dirty stuff might get in there and poison the people living in the interior.

A. I will give you an argument against that. We cannot afford to do that.

Q. Is it not a fact? I don't want any reasons.

A. It is absolutely not a fact.

Q. You think then there should be some provision by which in one place no one interest should have a licence for more than, say, 50 per cent. of the cinemas. Do you think it would be a wholesome provision?

A. Yes, I think it would be a wholesome provision.

Q. No one interest should have a licence for more than 50 per cent. of the cinemas in any particular place?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you think that will in any way hamper the trade?

A. No, I don't think so.

Q. Do you think it will have the effect of creating more cinema shows if such a provision were made?

A. I believe it would.

Q. You think more cinemas would come into existence?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you think it would also be helpful to the Indian industry if such a provision were made—with the quota system introduced?

A. It would.

Q. You think it would really work any great hardship to the trade if such a clause were introduced now?

A. I don't think so.

Q. In no place should one man or one company or one interest hold or deal with more than 50 per cent. of the cinemas. You think that will give a fair field for the independent man?

A. Yes.

Mr. Green: If there is only one theatre in a place?

A. Well, when the third one comes into question, the point will arise.

Chairman: But you think it is a rule that won't work any hardship and on the other hand it may be useful.

A. It will bring out a little capital and bring out people who are hesitating to open cinemas.

*Sir H. Jaffer*: You will be glad if the Indian industry progresses?

A. Yes.

Q. Your company will be very hard hit.

A. No. Certainly not. There is no competition between the first-class theatre house and the others that I have described.

Q. So there are three firms in Calcutta, yourself, Madans, and the Universal Supplying Agency?

A. These are the important ones. There is also one Alliance Trades Agency.

Q. Are there no British agencies here?

A. None.

Q. Do you import British films yourself?

A. Yes.

Q. So you are agents for . . .

A. Not agents. We buy the Indian rights.

Q. Do you get any help from the American Consul here?

A. Well, he personally is a very good man but obviously he cannot interfere in the course that the business has taken in America.

Q. You said something about distributing agencies abroad for Indian films. Do you think the British Consul will be able to assist in this direction in different parts of the world?

A. That will be, as I said, Sir, at a very much later stage. What I have thought about the Imperial scheme is that if Government promotes the production of educational and agricultural films now to some extent, and if in the Empire itself there is some quota for these Empire films all round, we can also get some advantages from Great Britain herself so far as British pictures are concerned.

Q. Is there any board in England or any agency in England which gives you information or which gives the board information about the production of their films in England?

A. Only private agencies.

Q. Would it be a good thing if such boards are established in the British Empire?

A. Yes.

Q. You are supplying pictures to about 35 Indian cinemas in the whole of India, Burma and Ceylon?

A. Yes.

Q. And the Universal more than yourself? About 80 or 85?

A. I believe so.

Q. And Madras about 90?

A. Yes.

Q. Then where is the question of monopoly?

A. Well, I have not affirmed that there is a monopoly.

*Mr. Neogy*: All that he has said is that there is a tendency to a monopoly.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer*: There is no monopoly?

A. If there was a monopoly I would not be here to-day to answer your question. But there are certain signs and indications which might possibly lead the average man to come to the conclusion that there is a tendency in this direction. There is a tendency to corner the sources of supply and there is a tendency to corner the sources of exhibition. If we read these signs aright, I think we are right in concluding that there is a tendency to monopoly.

**Q.** Question 8 (4), what do you mean by "there exists some amount of cut-throat competition amongst some producers"?

**A.** I will tell you. Supposing a picture was produced called "The Drum Major."

**Q.** I only want to know about cut-throat competition.

**A.** I can best explain it by giving you a concrete instance. Supposing a picture were produced. I take that picture, and exhibit it here and in the course of my exhibition, a picture is released "The Further Adventures of a Drum Major". A rival, without giving me a chance, offers twice the price and takes it off. I wait to see how this picture will go before I buy the sequel, but my competitor buys it up, paying a very stiff price for it.

**Q.** Again I don't understand what you say about "guddis".

**A.** Guddis are indigenous business houses, offices.

**Q.** Who are they and what do they manage?

**A.** Well, certain financiers. Some man, say an upcountry man, who does not know anything about the business, but has some money. He invests some money in the cinema.

**Q.** You say it is subversive to the growth of the industry.

**A.** Certain principles must be introduced in the control of cinema business, e.g., if I give you a picture, it must be shown in one place and not shown at two places. It must not be torn heedlessly in any way. It must be returned in the same condition in which I have given it.

**Q.** But what has that got to do with the Marwari?

**A.** I don't say Marwaris, but guddis. Marwaris use the word "guddis" in regard to their business office.

**Q.** To whom does this refer?

**A.** Well, any class of traders. Guddi means a shop. I mean the business is western in origin and it must develop along western lines.

**Q.** Do you know that stolen copies of films are imported?

**A.** Pirated copies. Yes, they are, they do come to India.

**Q.** What experience have you about it?

**A.** I had a picture called "Thundering Hoofs" which I imported to Burma. I held the rights for it for five years. Just as I cleared my picture I saw an advertisement in a Burma paper that another man was exhibiting the same picture.

**Q.** How do you know it was a pirated copy?

**A.** Well, he admitted it himself. He handed over the copy with our costs.

**Q.** How did they manage to pirate the copy?

**A.** Well, what happens probably is this: the film laboratories are very big where the prints are made. Copies are stolen and sent off.

**Mr. Green:** I suppose it may even come from another territory?

**Chairman:** But how? It must be at the place of production surely?

**A.** Oh yes, from the same negative. Just as they print a number of copies of a book. You give the order. Probably they print more than they are ordered. These things are never marked. It is done stealthily by the servants employed in the industry. So in this connection I would make one submission for your consideration, that some legislation should be given effect to to prevent the titles of two pictures being the same.

**Mr. Green:** You have your copyright law?

**A.** That is very vague in this country.

**Q.** You can always go to the courts and file an injunction.

**A.** Suppose they start showing the picture in Karachi, and I have my offices in Burma.

*Chairman:* You mean deceptive titles—same titles. You think the copyright law is not sufficient for your purposes? Have you had any instances?

A. Yes.

Q. Did you try? Did anybody attempt to take the protection which the copyright law gives and fail?

A. Well, we have consulted lawyers and solicitors and they say this is very vague, this is very difficult. It is no use trying it.

Q. Have you got the written opinion of the lawyers?

A. I consulted my solicitors. But there will be another difficulty. Whoever produces the picture first holds the rights. We have got to get the American firm as witnesses.

*Mr. Green:* But you told us that in the case of "Thundering Hoofs" that the action you took was very cheap and very speedy?

A. But that was in connection with a pirated copy. Here I have to deal with *bonâ fide* similarity.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* How can legislation to prevent such thefts?

A. Well, the man who imports the first copy will get the rights. Supposing there is a picture called "Parisian Nights". I import the picture here—my contract dates the 1st January 1927, with the American producers. Another firm imports a picture with the same title and his contract dates the 2nd of January. I submit, Sir, that I should have the right to use that and my competitor should be asked to change the title.

*Chairman:* But why is it the original producer does not complain? It must be a case where the original producer does not complain?

A. But one is in France and the other is in America. But they don't know that they are giving similar titles to two different pictures.

Q. It is more an injury to him than to you.

A. Well, they have got their money.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* Did you report this matter to the police or anybody?

A. No, we wrote to the American producers to change the title.

Q. About this pirated copy?

A. Oh! yes.

Q. What steps did the police take?

A. No, not to the police, only to the American Consul, and we cabled to the agent who had sold us the film and he took up the point with his people.

Q. As regards the title which you have just mentioned, would it not be a good thing if the titles of British and American films were also written in some vernacular of India?

A. Well, I think you had better leave that to the exhibitor. If he thinks it will be more profitable he will put it in.

Q. Well, you are an exhibitor?

A. Perhaps for Rangoon houses I might use Burmese titles.

Q. And for Bombay Gujarati titles?

A. Oh yes, but what about Marathi. There is a large population of Marathi.

Q. You say for Rangoon at least you do agree.

A. To some extent.

Q. Have you ever written to your head office in America or England to have these things done?

A. No, there has been no demand for this so far.

Q. You don't advise it?

A. I do advise. I think it would be a good thing to have the vernacular to popularise British pictures in the second class houses that I have mentioned.

Q. I am told that some rejected films in England and America are in circulation in India?

A. I have no knowledge, except for one film some years back. That film is "Foolish Wives".

Q. Have you got that film here?

A. It is not my film.

Q. Is it in Calcutta?

A. I do not know.

*Chairman*: Had it been actually rejected in Britain?

A. It was disapproved of.

Q. It had been passed by the British Board of Censors?

A. Yes.

Q. It is not a case where it had been rejected?

A. No.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer*: Those films which you get here are censored in America or Britain before they come out here?

A. 99 per cent. of them bear the seal of the British Board of Review or the National Board of Review in New York.

Q. Yesterday we were told that review is not meant for censoring.

A. I do not know. It is signed by them.

Q. Yours is a limited company?

A. Private limited company, registered under the Joint-Stock Companies Act.

Q. Have you got a copy of the balance sheet for the last year?

A. I have not got it with me now. It is not available to the public.

Q. The Madans are a public company?

A. Yes.

Q. Have you got his balance sheet?

A. I have got a copy of his balance sheet about the time that I was a shareholder myself there, but I do not know whether I shall be justified in producing it. I was a shareholder at the time and as such I produce a copy. (Handed in). I was for a short time employed in the Madans.

Q. You have now joined the opposite camp?

A. No, I left it.

Q. Will it be a good thing if, in order to avoid loss to these producing companies, the scenarios and stories are censored before they are produced?

A. I do not think so, because producers are born and not made. They will have to take the risk. If the producers have not got the sense to understand what are the limitations, they must suffer. I do not think it will be possible to do so.

Q. You say in answer to 8 (c), "Cinemas managed by Military authorities are perhaps the best managed and conducted on sound commercial lines and principles." That is done in India?

A. Yes.

Q. Better than your own?

A. They do not control the theatres in the bigger cities and therefore I cannot make a comparison.

*Mr. Neogy*: Do they run theatres themselves, I mean the military authorities?

A. Yes. In the fort they are running a theatre. They run theatres in many stations on commercial principles, but I think they cater solely for troops.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer*: They manage them better than these other small theatres?

A. Yes.

Q. So Government should help these people more than other production companies?

A. They should be encouraged to spread their cinemas for public purposes under their management—to open them out to the public and let the management be to some extent under them.

Q. In reply to No. 45 you say that the studio should not be licensed or registered for the present. What about indecent films produced for private circulation and others?

A. Registration and licensing cannot prevent that. The Inspector only comes occasionally and I could easily avoid him if I wanted to. The Fire Brigade and other authorities will be continually inspecting these things so that I do not think it is necessary. It will only be an additional restriction upon the industry.

Mr. Neogy: You have agreed with the suggestion that no one interest should own or control more than 50 per cent. of the show houses in a particular locality? Would you adopt this as your future policy, or would you apply it so as to affect the existing concerns also?

A. It would be in the interest of Indians generally if it could be done immediately, but my difficulty is this: Where is the money to come from to acquire the excess of the 50 per cent. owned by any particular concern? If the Government of India is prepared to find the necessary money, which it should in my opinion, the proposition becomes very easy.

Q. You depend on Government purchasing these surplus houses?

A. And then hand them over to concerns, insure them and get payments from them in instalments.

Q. Supposing in a place like Karachi a local man has just a little more than 50 per cent. of the show houses, you will be forcing him under this scheme to dispose of his surplusage and to that extent you would be forcing him perhaps to accept a lower price for his concern than he would deserve?

A. The Land Acquisition Collector can evaluate.

Q. But what about the good will and other things?

A. His balance sheet will show it.

Q. You are anxious to see that no injustice is done to anybody?

A. Yes.

Q. And that Government should acquire these concerns and then later on hand them over to private agencies? That is your idea?

A. Yes.

Q. This will enable you to avoid cornering in exhibition?

A. Yes.

Q. But what about cornering in distribution, because you mentioned these two evils?

A. Stop block booking in the first instance. Government must absolutely put its foot down on America or Germany in their block booking.

Colonel Crawford: How will you do that?

A. To declare it illegal. In this way if you make any purchase it must be on the strength of judging each picture and not by block booking.

Mr. Neogy: Can legislation in India effectively put a stop to block booking, for instance, in America? What would be the effect of this policy?

A. America does not care for the Indian market and we won't be worse off for that.

Q. Therefore do you expect America to change its system of block booking just for the purpose of complying with your rules and regulations here?

A. The British Government in England can approach the American Government.

Q. It will be a matter of negotiation and not of legislative prohibition?

A. Yes, that this is detrimental to the interests of the Indian Empire.

Q. Would you leave that to negotiations?

A. Yes.



**Q.** Is block booking a sort of normal feature of American trade?

**A.** I think it has developed with the development of the American industry and the Germans are copying it.

**Q.** It does not prevail in Great Britain?

**A.** No, not in my experience.

**Chairman:** They have made it illegal there.

**A.** In the country itself, but the law does not apply to exports.

**Mr. Neogy:** You do not regret having shown British pictures in your theatre?

**A.** No.

**Q.** I take it you consider that the results that you have obtained from showing British pictures are practically the same as showing American pictures?

**Q.** I can produce my books to show that in many instances they are better.

**Chairman:** Will you just send us a dozen instances? Take a three months period.

**A.** I will send you the results picture by picture for three months.

**Mr. Neogy:** And this in spite of the fact that you have to pay sometimes very high prices for British pictures?

**A.** Comparatively.

**Q.** And you have characterised those prices in your written statement as being sometimes prohibitive?

**A.** Yes. But then the advantage is this: Whereas I take only one British picture for a certain amount, if I were to take an American picture of more or less the same value, I would be saddled with about 30 comparative duds.

**Q.** What percentage of 'duds' are generally contained in a block on an average?

**A.** 80 per cent., comparative duds.

**Q.** And 20 per cent. are first rate pictures?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** In spite of this great handicap, is it your experience that the exhibitor of American pictures makes any greater profit than an exhibitor like yourself.

**A.** That is a very difficult matter to answer.

**Q.** This is certainly recognised to be a difficulty by them?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Why then do they not go in for British pictures and do away with this block booking system altogether, if that is equally profitable?

**A.** As it is, practically all the sources of good supply have been cornered and no one concern in India, however big it may be, can show all the pictures that they have bought. What are they to do with those pictures, if in addition to that they have got to go to the British market? Again there are not enough British pictures to go round as yet.

**Q.** And if the number is increased there is no reason to suppose that these exhibitors would stick to the American block system and not go in for British pictures?

**A.** If it is not to their interest they won't.

**Q.** If British pictures go on increasing, the tendency would be to discontinue this block system, and you can depend upon that tendency?

**A.** More or less.

**Q.** Does not a picture sometimes prove a surprise? For instance, a picture which you might consider as a dud from the trade point of view—produces very good results, and a picture which you considered to be satisfactory from all accounts, proves to be disappointing?

**A.** Occasionally, Yes.

Q. So that it is rather difficult to foresee the exact financial results which might accrue from exhibiting any particular picture?

A. Generally speaking, we can make a fairly shrewed guess about the quality of the pictures.

Q. In Lucknow we were told by an exhibitor that "The Merry Widow" had proved to be rather disappointing there, but that he would have chosen it even if he had the previous choice. But he had not the choice, and merely because he had not the choice you cannot altogether blame the system? It does happen sometimes?

A. Yes. From individual cases we cannot generalise.

Q. You are prepared to accept an Indian quota of educational films to be compulsorily shown?

A. Yes, in all theatres.

Q. Educational meaning generally instructional?

A. Yes.

Q. Why don't you agree to the quota in regard to the entertainment films as well?

A. As I have told you in my written statement, there are different classes of cinemas patronised by different classes of people.

Q. The people would stand bad quality in instructional films but won't stand it in entertainment films?

A. The instructional film would not go the length of the whole programme. It will be just a reel of 700 or 800 feet.

Q. Supposing it is left to you to cover the quota either by showing a proportion every day at every show or by showing a longer reel at intervals—just as you like. There may be short comic pieces, there may be instructional films, there may be long entertainment films, and so on. If it is left to your choice to make up the quota, either by showing small bits every evening or by showing a number of longer productions—would you have any objection?

A. I would not have any objection if the entertainment films were of the same competitive standard as the western films that we import.

Q. You are not being compelled to show entertainment films. Suppose it were left to your choice?

A. I would show educational films.

Q. That is for you to decide, provided you have the supply. You don't mind this being left to your choice?

A. No.

Q. You do not want the quota to be confined by legislation to instructional films alone?

A. Provided the option is in my hands. If it is a financially sound proposition I will be the first to take it up myself.

Q. The present quality of Indian films is rather poor?

A. Yes.

Q. You were also in the producing line for some time?

A. A little.

Q. This quality would not go down with the European audiences here?

A. I do not think so, generally speaking.

Q. Did you ever try to find a market for Indian films abroad?

A. I have not myself, but I have read reports in the *Cinematograph Weekly* of London that another firm tried and it was not a success. In fact the review of that much boomed picture, "The Light of Asia," in the British journals was not very encouraging.

Q. Would you accept the interest shown by the European population in Calcutta in Indian pictures of the present type to be a guide for you in deciding as to whether there is any possibility of a market outside?

A. The attitude of the European population in Calcutta to-day so far as the Indian pictures are concerned, is one of indifference. They do not go to see them because the standard does not appeal to them.

Mr. Green: You mean the technical side?

A. Yes. But I am inclined to believe that the subjects would be of greater appeal to Europeans than they are to ourselves. "The Thief of Baghdad," "Kismet," and such like pictures have gone very well here with Europeans as well as Indian audiences.

Mr. Neogy: Does that encourage you in hoping that the present quality of Indian pictures would appeal to the British market?

A. No.

Q. Coming to your answer to No. 22, you are in favour of a sort of reciprocity arrangement for the Indian and British Empire pictures, and in reply to clause (a) you say, "It would decidedly promote the indigenous producing industry, at first by exchanges, on a commercial basis of industrial films and in the future on a more ambitious scale." I do not quite understand what you mean by this. Having regard to the existing quality of the Indian film and the existing interest shown by Europeans. . .

A. By existing I mean educational films. Supposing some sort of effort was made to produce a larger number of educational films in this country and supposing it was compulsory upon all parts of the British Empire, at least that part which Great Britain can control, to show these films there, then subsequently we could get a corresponding agreement from them; we can show some of their films in exchange and in future we can get a corresponding agreement from them that they will show our entertainment films when they are of the necessary standard.

Q. Is that possible to be arranged on a commercial basis? Do you think it would pay anybody either to produce educational films or to distribute educational films?

A. I have suggested that Government should take it up.

Q. So it cannot be done on a commercial basis?

A. From the distribution side. Government will produce them and hand them over for distribution to some party to do the commercial part of the thing.

Q. In reply to clause (b) you say that this will promote better understanding between India and the rest of the Empire?

A. Decidedly.

Q. You mean educational films?

A. Yes. It would give us a chance of reply to such slanders as Miss Mayo's.

Q. So you must ensure the exhibition of these films in the other parts of the Empire?

A. Yes.

Q. And if you are going to leave the distribution to a commercial enterprise how do you ensure those pictures being shown in all the different parts of the Empire?

A. I think it presupposes that. It says: let there be legislation all over the Empire, that India must show so many feet of British films and Great Britain must show so many feet of Indian films.

Q. It should be made compulsory in all the different parts of the Empire to show those educational films produced by India, that is your idea?

A. Yes.

Q. And you would have this arrangement confined to educational films to start with?

A. Just at present.

Q. You have a specific recommendation to make with regard to British production, and that is, that the British Government should give a subsidy

on the British films, and not that we should do anything by way of discrimination between American and non-American?

A. No.

Q. It is Britain's look-out, and Britain should find the money?

A. Yes. So far as the export of films to India is concerned, Britain should help her producers, because here is a ready made market for her. So far as we are concerned we are prepared to show British pictures, but the prices of some of them are prohibitive.

Q. So, all those details will have to be considered, prices and other conditions of exhibition?

A. Yes.

Mr. Coatsman: Has the point yet been reached where the Indian producers are competing amongst each other keenly for the market?

A. I do not think so.

Q. You are not now producing?

A. No, except small topical films.

Q. Where do you sell those topical films?

A. We show them all over our cinemas. Our circuit contains 35 cinemas in India, Burma and Ceylon.

Q. All over India?

A. Yes, it is spread out.

Q. Have you any in the Punjab?

A. Yes, Rawalpindi, Ambala.

Q. Have you ever sent any to England?

A. No, I do not think so.

Q. Do you know that there is a special officer in the Board of Trade who would be glad to advise you about marketing films like that in England—I mean he is an officer of the Board of Trade in England.

A. I am not aware of that.

Q. Would you care to sell yours in England?

A. If the standard was good I would offer it there.

Q. You are a man of considerable experience and you would know whether the standard is up to the mark. If at any future time you produce a topical film which you think is of sufficient technique and sufficient general interest to attract a market in England, you might consider approaching this officer, and if you do not want to do it direct, you must remember that the Government of India will be quite prepared to help you through my office. Do you spend much on advertising?

A. Quite a lot.

Q. You do of course keep regular accounts?

A. Yes.

Q. What percentage of your expenditure is accounted for by advertisement?

A. Certainly one-fourth.

Q. I take it that it includes handbills, posters as well as newspaper advertisements?

A. Yes.

Q. Is the newspaper advertisement an important part of your expenditure?

A. Yes, the most important part.

Q. Of course you advertise in the papers in English and in the various Indian languages?

A. In the *Basumati* we advertise regularly, and in the case of extraordinary pictures we advertise them in the Urdu papers, Bengali, Hindi and so on. We have handbills in those languages also.

**Q.** Do you consider you are getting a sufficient return from your expenditure on advertisement?

**A.** Is there a way of stopping it? I think that the money we spend on advertisement is a little excessive, but if you have to meet the competition offered by others you have got to keep on this method of advertisement, because the whole thing depends on advertisement.

**Q.** Do the newspapers give you any preferential treatment for your advertisements?

**A.** I think the amusement rates are lower than other rates.

**Q.** Are you sure?

**A.** I think I may say I am sure.

**Q.** I have here a notice of a comic produced by you. When did you produce it?

**A.** 1920.

**Q.** I take it that it was produced on western models. Did it have any attraction?

**A.** If I may say so, it was one of the most successful films ever shown in Bengal. Even now Madans are showing it in Howrah, I think.

**Q.** Are you still getting returns on it?

**A.** I have lost my rights. I sold it to one party who sold it to Madans. This producing company went out of existence in 1922.

**Q.** Owing to lack of finance?

**A.** Yes, and lack of internal organisation and business capacity.

**Q.** You think now there is still a market for that sort of Indian film?

**A.** Oh! yes.

**Q.** And the humour was what you would call good clean humour?

**A.** Yes. In fact that picture was offered to be shown to me by the then owner of the theatre we control in Calcutta now (the Bijou Theatre Limited) but he offered a very small price and naturally we gave it to the Indian theatres and it had a very good successful run there.

**Q.** Of course I never saw it, but was it the sort of picture that might have gone down in England?

**A.** If more money could have been spent on it, more time devoted to it, I think those subjects should be very popular because it has a veneer of Westernism in it though the subject and customs are Indian; there won't be anything difficult for British people to understand in the picture.

**Q.** Don't you think or do you think that there is scope for a producing company with a big capital and good expert staff to take up the preparation of Indian topical films with an eye to the foreign market? For example, now the great encounter between Zbyesco and Gama is a thing of world-wide interest. Suppose men of the requisite technical capacity took that film, my own opinion is that it would have a run in England, America and Germany almost equal to the Tunney-Dempsey Final; not quite, perhaps, but almost equal. In fact, you will probably remember some years ago when Hackenschmid was at his prime his wrestles were bigger events than the boxing championship of the world.

**A.** I fully agree, but the difficulty is that ten of us rush down to take the same picture. There is nobody to protect our rights.

**Q.** That is the point I wanted to get at. Could not one particular firm arrange to have the monopoly?

**A.** Who are the owners of the rights of the show?

**Q.** In an event like the one I am thinking of, the Maharaja of Patiala, because he is financing it. But take the opening of the new Assembly Chamber at Delhi last year. It was one of the great historical events of our time and it is a terrible tragedy that nobody in all India was there to take a film of it though I tried to get . . .

A. Well, we were not approached about it. Your department knows very well that we produce all these topical of His Excellency the Viceroy's visits, etc.

Q. The only people who said they would do it were the G. I. P. and their technique was not good enough for America and England. Constantly things like that are happening. Don't you think it is worthwhile that some company should start with a reasonable capital to produce topical films?

A. Oh! yes.

Q. And such a company could also produce dramas?

A. That is my suggestion.

Q. So you would agree that one of the most hopeful ways of approach to the development of the film industry would be a firm starting on these topical and gradually building up the business.

A. That is my suggestion exactly.

Q. The questions I am going to ask now fit in with this. Do you know how many producing companies there are in America?

Chairman: Have you got a book which gives the information, something which gives the information about the theatres and companies?

A. Not the theatres but all the big producing companies.

Mr. Coatsman: You can give us the number approximately?

A. About 20 including the companies which produce short subjects and comedies and things like that. There are 8 really big ones that matter.

Q. That was about the figure I had in mind—about 8. Now there are at least 8 producing companies in this country but on an infinitely smaller scale. Would you agree that the great capital resources which the American firms dispose of and the consequent excellence of their work and their marketing power come from the fact that there are so few producing companies with the capital aggregated into a few hands?

A. Yes, that is true, and also the fortuitous advantage of the War.

Q. But apart from the fortuitous advantage of the War which practically did not involve America, you will agree that the aggregation of capital in these few hands is an excellent thing for the development of the industry and its technique? I am not thinking of competition or monopoly.

A. I am thinking of the cost of production. You see the Stars and the scenario writers are all charging very heavy prices. I think if the thing were split up a little more there will be more competition and prices would come down a bit.

Q. As a matter of fact I understand that the big American firms are now going to reduce wages. They find they cannot keep up with them. Do you ever read the American *Mercury*?

A. No.

Q. I must send you an article that I read in it called Frenzied Finance. It describes the financing of the big films in America. The point I wanted to make is this: in India we have a number of small producing firms and I think we all agree that the quality of their films is low. Would it not be better if those firms could amalgamate themselves into one or two firms and so dispose of bigger resources?

A. The greatest difficulty to that I see, Sir, is first the psychological difficulty, the question of temperament. At least in Bengal it is very difficult for people to get on together, everyone wants to be the head of the concern, there is a lack of business instinct and consequently there would again be a monopoly in the hands of a few monopolists.

Chairman: Also the lack of opportunities for business training and business education?

A. Yes.

Mr. Coatsman: Well then let us approach it from a different angle. Suppose a company were floated in India by public subscription with a capital of 50 lakhs and started producing pictures. I take it, the Indian, however

ignorant and illiterate he may be, is like the rest of us and wants the best he can get, and there is not the least doubt he would soon see the manifest superiority of these productions to the little things which are now being produced and he would go for them and the little companies would be frozen out?

A. Yes, that would happen.

Q. Do you agree then that what is more necessary than anything else for increasing the technical excellence and the quality of Indian films is some really strong company?

A. A really strong company should start. At the present moment a little foreign talent might be employed in directing. I am inclined to believe that the photographic standard is not very low, but so far as directorial talent is concerned a little foreign talent will be required for the time being, British or American.

Mr. Neogy: What about the capital? Would you expect to have 50 lakhs subscribed in India for a concern like that? You would require foreign capital too?

A. That point is not raised here.

Mr. Coatsman: How many theatre chains are there here in this country—your own, Madan's, Universal, Pathe . . .

A. And I think the Alliance.

Chairman: He gave us the answers to those questions before.

Mr. Coatsman: I am sorry. I take it there is keen fighting between these combines for possession of pictures?

A. So far as the best part of the American market is concerned, we are all shut out by the existence of one big concern here. We get only the crumbs.

Q. What I want to get at really is this,—Don't answer if you don't want to,—Does Madan with its big financial resources ever go in for the same sort of fighting development that the big American and English industrial firms do. For example, you know how the Standard Oil Company when it wants to capture the trade of a locality goes and sells its oil below the economic price and when it has captured the market, then it raises its price. Does Madan ever go to a place where there is one theatre and in order to get control of that theatre pay more than its economic value in order to guarantee its footing there?

A. Yes, it does.

Q. And Madan's big resources make it impossible for you to compete against that sort of thing?

A. Hypothetically their big resources, but if you examine their last balance sheet what do you think of a company which has 20 lakhs of debt with a subscribed capital of 35 lakhs, rushing in to capture cinemas by paying four times their legitimate rental?

Chairman: His point is that they have not got the big financial resources you assume.

A. No, but compared to us they have gigantic powers to kill us even. I could give specific examples.

Mr. Coatsman: Now our Chairman asked you various questions on these lines but would you sum up in one or two sentences how you are affected, how your chain is affected, by the superior strength of Madan's?

A. Primarily it is this: If I can show pictures only in 30 stations I must charge perhaps a little more than theatres—suppose there is somebody else who owns a hundred theatres, he can charge a little less. He will go to a place even if he does not own a theatre there; he will say "If he is giving films to you for 20 I will give you for 5". These are instances that are always happening.

Chairman: That is quite usual competition in any trade, isn't it?

A. If I might give an example, supposing in a town like Calcutta there is one concern with 13 theatres under it, and I am competing against it with

only one theatre. Supposing I am paying for my theatre Rs. 200 with taxes. My lease expires next year. Supposing the other comes along and says "I will give you Rs. 4,000; you turn out those people", naturally the landlord does so. Is that competition in the usual course of business? That is taking a man's bread and butter out of his mouth. If you want to do that you can build your own theatre.

*Mr. Green:* Business is business. It is very often ruthless.

A. This sort of ruthlessness if it continues will kill the industry.

*Mr. Coatman:* May I ask for an example within your personal experience? But I certainly agree that it exposes you to great dangers.

*Chairman:* Tell it to the British India Steam Navigation Company.

A. It is bad not only for us, but it is bad for the country, bad for the Indian, bad for the whole of the Empire; and the ultimate result of that sort of thing will be that we will be in the strangle-hold of America.

*Mr. Coatman:* I think you showed "The Flag Lieutenant." What was its success like?

A. It was very successful.

Q. Was it expensive?

A. Compared to the returns I won't say it was expensive, though when I bought it I thought it was expensive.

Q. And what did you think of the technique of that picture?

A. It was splendid technique. It has not all the subtleties of Berlin or the blatancies of Hollywood; still it is one of the best pictures I have ever seen.

*Mr. Green:* I take it it is a British picture?

A. Absolutely.

*Chairman:* A war picture.

A. Not exactly a War picture but it deals with the power of the British Navy. There is also a good love story and I have had a larger number of Indians going to the theatre to see that picture than ever before.

Q. I want to see a good British social drama where they deal with the underworld life, well treated in an attractive way—which do you think I should see?

A. The underworld? I have not any British picture. "The Triumph of the Rat" may give some idea; but I think you have selected to see "Monte Carlo." That is a British picture.

*Colonel Crawford:* Can I take it that to-day the exhibition of films in India is not a very paying proposition? I think Madan's are paying no dividends. Are you paying dividends?

A. Yes, because ours is a private limited company, we do not squander our money.

Q. If you profits out of your exhibitions you are satisfied with that?

A. It has not been a good business, but it is getting better since 1920.

Q. It is on the upward grade?

A. Yes.

Q. I just want to ask on the question of censorship, do you want only one board for the whole of India?

A. No.

Q. What are your suggestions as regards block booking. Is not block-booking in favour of the producer? He has got an outturn and he wants a buyer to buy up the whole of his produce? That is the most satisfactory way for him.

A. Yes.

Q. From the point of view of the public and the exhibitor it means you are bound to take a certain amount of bad stuff—am I correct?

A. Quite.



Q. There is no necessity for you to show that stuff?

A. I am locking up a good deal of money in that way.

Q. What it comes to is this: You are paying more for the big pictures?

A. Yes.

Q. But there are not enough big pictures at present?

A. No.

Q. That position also is improving. You have the British industry coming into the market, the German, French and others have sufficient big pictures and you can put the junk into the cupboard and leave it there.

A. That will be the only way to fight it.

Q. The Indian market, as we call it, includes India, Ceylon and Burma. That is a complete market like South Africa or the Middle East.

A. Yes, we call it the territory.

Q. And in all that territory there are only really five profit earning centres—Calcutta, Bombay, Madras, Colombo and Rangoon.

A. Yes, if you like to put it that way.

Q. The rest of the market is practically negligible from your point of view.

A. These theatres usually pay the cost and from the rest we recover the profit.

Q. These five centres cover the cost of the pictures?

A. Yes.

Q. Now I just want to question you for a moment on the dangers of monopoly in the Indian film producing industry. Does that mean that we are going to get the Indian producer squeezed out?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you think a monopoly in this country will squeeze out the Indian producer?

A. Yes.

Q. What is going to be the harm to the public? Are you going to get a rotten stamp of entertainment?

A. Yes, certainly.

Q. But the public won't go to a rotten stamp of entertainment?

A. Well, to some extent they will. They want their recreation and the cinema is getting more or less a habit.

Q. Have you any suggestions as to how you can secure competition? Obviously competition is the best thing for the public and for the Indian film producer. Have you any suggestion how this Committee may secure competition?

A. Well, the suggestion made by one of the members was that no particular concern should have more than 50 per cent. of the cinemas in one particular town. That is one point. Then I have one or two small suggestions.

Q. That will be carried out by the local licensing authorities.

A. The land revenue officer will also have some say in the matter so far as valuation, etc., is concerned. I have got one or two small points. I have just made them out here. Each municipality might be encouraged to build smaller places, in the style the Chairman suggested, in the municipal towns where these travelling road shows might show, where Government educational and health pictures might be shown.

Mr. Green: You can only suggest that; you cannot demand that.

A. Yes. I submit that with all respect. That is the only way I could think of. Taking the big municipal towns in India the municipalities might be forced to levy a small tax, but I leave that to you. It won't cost much—a small hall, 2 walls, a roof of corrugated iron, a small amount of furnishing, etc.

*Chairman* : Can you put us in touch with someone who runs these shows, we have not come across anyone yet.

A. There is the London Bioscope Company, the Capital Bioscope show and so on.

Q. Perhaps you will give the addresses to the Secretary of the Committee.

A. I will. They deserve some encouragement and the Government can help them to purchase light Ford lorries which will be insured and the money paid back in instalments.

*Colonel Crawford* : You said you did not consider that films lower British prestige. I don't think that is the point of view from which we want you to examine it; but you mentioned that you had the true perspective and you could understand these films in the right perspective. I take it there are people in India who have not got the right perspective?

A. I would not insinuate that. If such a phenomenon does exist, why blame the poor film for it? Can you not go back to the year 1905?

Q. Your general idea is . . .

A. That films are not responsible.

Q. Supposing the European community objects to certain scenes being shown in films.

A. Cut them out.

Q. I am trying to find out. You will agree with me that the Indian is exceedingly modest in questions covering the relationship between the sexes. Most Englishmen who live in this country recognise that modesty. Do you think it not possible that we like to see our own people in this country adopting the same modest behaviour?

A. I do not think the behaviour of the average Britisher is immodest.

Q. No, No. But there are certain definite Indian customs which those who know India recognise and pay attention to. For instance, we ourselves might be quite accustomed to another man in our own dressing room seeing us in an entirely naked state but we don't consider it correct in the presence of a native servant. We recognise definitely certain Indian customs regarding the standard of modesty required and we feel that these standards of modesty are not maintained in the films.

A. I personally do not agree.

*Mr. Green* : You are going to let us have the footage about "The Triumph of the Rat." Mr. Laharry. I was interested to hear that you are going to show the film "Sacrifice." In putting on that film will you spend money on publicity or does the owner of the film advertise?

A. We have got to do the advertising.

Q. You will do it on the same scale as for any Western picture?

A. Of course we have to. otherwise the obvious conclusion will be that the picture is not of the same standard.

### **Supplementary Statement of Mr. N. C. LAHARRY, Manager and Secretary, Globe Theatres, Limited, of India, Burma and Ceylon, dated the 2nd January 1928.**

1. Talking about the percentages of good and indifferent pictures the expression "duds" was used by way of comparison. What I mean to say is that if a producing company produces one "Ben Hur" he also makes a certain number of other films which are very indifferent in comparison. Every company produces a large number of these pictures which are very ordinary indeed from the Box Office angle and from the point of view of public favour.

2. It has been stated by a witness that there are 360 cinemas in India and as such every distributor has access to them. Therefore it has been argued

the theory of a possible monopoly is baseless. This argument is misleading and fallacious.

(i) There are four key-theatres in India at Calcutta, Bombay, Rangoon and Colombo. These are really the big towns which pay the major part of the cost. The smaller theatres pay very little. Roughly they cannot afford to pay more than Rs. 100 per programme.

Now, suppose a film cost £350 which would be about Rs. 6,000 including costs of the print and publicity and freight insurance, etc. The four key-theatres will pay as hire Rs. 2,500 for one week's run at each centre. The other Rs. 3,500 must be made up from the smaller centres. In India on account of the lack of real chains of cinemas and on account of distance it is not possible to show one particular picture at more than 20 cinemas during the year and that with several copies (which makes the costs another Rs. 1,500 more). By the time the picture has been to 20 places, that is to say within 18 months of its import, it becomes old and other and newer pictures are in the field. Now if an importer has no place to show in the key-theatres where is he to raise his costs from?

Monopoly in this country means an attempt to corner the theatres in the key-cities. If this be done by any individual concern, the rest is easy of accomplishment. With several big theatres in the key-cities one single concern can import the best pictures leaving the others to take their leavings.

3. The statement that there are two other American concerns is no doubt true. But one of them has already been subtly pushed out of the Bombay market and Rangoon. The other had a theatre in Bombay which has also gone into the hands of a particular concern.

4. The statement is not true that there are any amount of good pictures in the open market. All the big companies of America have given them but to one single Indian Concern. The output of the others is not such as can compete successfully with films like "Ben Hur", "Beau Geste", etc. A reference to the published lists of any company will verify this statement.

8. Other indications of a tendency to monopoly:—

(i) My firm bought last 15 Metros. When the negotiations were complete they insisted that we shall not use their name in our advertisements. Metros is a well known name and popular with the public.

(ii) We hold the rights of a certain film "Enemies of Women" (which is a real big picture) which according to the contract expires on the 31st December 1927. The film reached us in February 1925, without any titles. We showed the picture in May 1925, thus having lost six months. We applied for an extension of the right on paying fresh royalty. The producers refuse to give us the picture and their Agent at present in India told me personally that they are going to give it to another concern.

(iii) The statement is untrue that a certain concern has acquired the lease of our Rangoon theatre after seeing an advertisement. It is a matter of record that their offer came first and we are asked to bid higher. They have paid four times the amount we are paying now although they have several theatres in Rangoon.

(iv) Up to 1924 we dealt with Messrs. Universals. When it came to their super picture "The Hunchback of Notre Dame," they acquired this by paying a heavy price for it as also taking a larger number of their films than we could.

(v) We dealt with Messrs. Pathe of Bombay. As soon as we showed Harold Lloyd's "Safety Last" they covered the best pictures of this concern also.

**Written Statement of Mr. F. E. JAMES, O.B.E., General Secretary,  
The Young Men's Christian Association, Calcutta.**

#### INTRODUCTORY.

1. No, but for 7 years I have been General Secretary of the Y. M. C. A. in Calcutta, which in its seven branches has a membership of over 2,000, of whom a larger number are Indian students, school boys and office clerks.

## GENERAL.

2. (a) (1) A large proportion of the educated classes in Calcutta visit the cinema. This is particularly the case among educated young men and especially among students. It was found that 73 per cent. of the late leaves issued by the Warden of a Student Hostel during a period of two months were for the cinema. This does not include those students who attended the early shows for which a late leave was not required. Out of a group of 38 students, it was discovered that 10 went to the cinema once in two weeks, 12 twice, 8 three times, 2 four times, 4 five times, and 2 six times.

2. (a) Compared with the population the percentage of the illiterate classes attending the cinema is small but their number is on the increase. Some of the cinemas in Machua Bazar and Harrison Road area are largely frequented by illiterates.

(b) In Calcutta the composition of the cinema audience varies according to the locality. In the Sham Bazar and Bhawanipore localities the cinema is frequented mainly by the educated middle class Indians with a small percentage of the taxi-driver class, and a certain number of illiterates. In the University area the audience would probably be composed of 50 per cent. students, 35 per cent. clerks, and about 15 per cent. small shop-keepers. In the cinemas in and near the European quarter there would probably be at least 50 per cent. Anglo-Indians and Europeans with a large number of Indian students and a certain number of Indian clerks. Much depends, however, on the particular film which is being shown in these cinemas.

(c) It is difficult to state with any accuracy what proportion of the audience consists of children under 14 or of adolescents of impressionable age. The percentage of the former has been calculated as low as 3 per cent. and as high as 25 per cent. The probability is that the percentage would be in the region of 5 per cent. though it would vary to some extent according to the locality. Adolescents of impressionable age should be present in large numbers. In a survey taken of a student hostel it was found that students under 20 years of age attended the cinema on an average of  $3\frac{1}{2}$  times a month and those over 20,  $2\frac{1}{2}$  times a month.

## PART I.

*Film Industry in India.*

3. Comedy, adventure and sentimental films seem to be the most popular with Indian audiences. Indian films are usually immediately popular though, generally speaking, they are of indifferent quality. Films such as "Krishna Kanta's Will," "The Life of Lord Buddha," "Harish Chandra," have enjoyed great popularity.

6. (a) Yes, on the whole, except that sensational films, such as America has specialized in, are very popular especially with illiterate audiences.

(b) Historical, religious, social and patriotic films would appeal most to the educated classes and mythological (e.g., Rajasthan) to the illiterates.

14. From the demand for educational lantern slides and lantern lectures one would judge that there should be a great demand for cinema films for educational purposes. The value of the portable cinema has been demonstrated again and again in our work and could be a most useful factor in adult education in connection with the problems of health, sanitation, agriculture and illiteracy.

18. The film industry is primarily a matter of private enterprise but in its infancy Government might well be prepared to help along the lines which are now being explored in England. Moreover the extended use of the film by the Government would in itself be an incentive to private enterprise.

## PART II.

*Social Aspects and Control.*

24. (a) Yes.

24. (c) Many of the films dealing with social life in the West have a harmful effect upon the younger members of the audience and the illiterate

classes. Stories centering round the extravagance and immorality of what is thought to be "high life" in the West are bad. Many films also dealing directly or indirectly with sex problems are liable to be misunderstood. Then there are films dealing with crooks and robbers which are distinctly injurious to boys and adolescents.

(d) Censorship is not adequate generally speaking in cases of "sex" films. There are certain films whose motive is thoroughly bad quite apart from the particularly suggestive incidents which may be cut out. A good example is a film called "Foolish Wives" which appeared in India some years ago. It was cut in Bombay and further cut in Bengal. Yet even then the whole film was of an unpleasant nature. This is indicated by the following trade description of the story:—"Count Karamzin, an adventurer, and his two cousins, the Princesses Olga and Vera Petachinkoff, are at Monte Carlo. The Count cultivates the acquaintance of Mrs. Hughes, wife of the American Envoy. Caught in a storm, these two shelter in a hut. Count Karamzin is prevented from seducing his companion by the arrival of a monk. A second attempt at seduction is foiled by a servant, another victim of the Count, who sets fire to a tower to which the Count has inveigled Mrs. Hughes. The two escape. Hughes knocks down the Count and orders him to leave Monte Carlo. The Princesses are arrested by the Police. The Count goes to the house of Ventucci, a counterfeiter. While there he rapes the half-witted daughter; Ventucci kills him and drops his body into a sewer. Hughes and his wife are reconciled." The film should never have been allowed to be shown anywhere in India.

25. Special consideration is required in censorship in India owing to the differences in social custom and the outlook between the East and the West.

27. There are many films which have been exhibited in India which appear to report life in the West at its lowest level. The uneducated or the partially educated are unable to make distinctions and are apt to form their opinions of the West from the films. It is impossible to prevent these films coming to India altogether but an endeavour should be made to restrict their number by careful censorship.

29. Yes.

30. This would be extremely difficult in India. It might however be possible to prevent children under that age of 12 entering cinemas unless accompanied by parents or guardians.

31. (a) Censorship is certainly one of the most potent methods of guarding against the mis-use of the film though it is not the only one.

32. The censorship in Bengal has improved greatly during the past few years and it is generally considered to be the strictest in India. To give greater continuity to membership, I would suggest that the member of the Board be appointed for 2 or 3 years. Further, I would suggest the addition of one Indian lady, a representative from the University, and one other representing directly, schools in the Province.

33. There is no reason to suppose that the growth in strictness in censorship of films in Bengal during the past few years has interfered with the recreation of the people or their attendance at the cinema.

34. (a) No.

(b) Yes. The most important thing is that there should be a uniform standard of censorship throughout India. The Central Board might be co-ordinating body, and a final court of appeal. It should be the rule that any films banned by one Provincial Board, should not be shown in any other area without the previous sanction of the Central Board. The question of films in Native States should also be dealt with by the Central Board.

35. (a) There should be a uniform constitution for all Provincial Boards.

(b) No. The tendency would be for the Board to leave everything for the office, which, as a general principle, is not desirable.

37. (a) No. Under the present arrangements a film which is passed, say, by the Bombay Board of Censors, cannot be prohibited in Bengal unless it has been shown and objection has been taken to it.

(b) Yes. Suggestions have been made under paragraph 34.

38. Yes. Within recent years the following films which were passed by the Bombay Board of Censors were taken exception to in Bengal and subjected to considerable cuts:—

1. *Passion.*
2. *Sin of Martha Queed.*
3. *Around Town Series VI.*
4. *Mysteries of Paris.*
5. *Foolish Wives.*
6. *Kismet.*
7. *Scaramouche.*
8. *The Sea Hawk.*
9. *The Cohens and Kellys.*
10. *Kiki.*

The following passed by the Bombay Board was banned altogether:—

*Circe the Enchantress.*

40. It is not an uncommon sight in Calcutta in certain quarters to see a crowd of men and boys standing around a cinema poster of a suggestive character depicting women in scanty attire or people in amatory attitudes.

41. Yes, as far as Bengal is concerned. Tribute must be paid to the Board of Censors for increasingly good work.

44. Certain public bodies should be represented on the Board of Censors and those dealing with the welfare of young people should make a practice of keeping in touch with what appears in cinemas. The Press would assist greatly if they established a weekly critic of films appearing in the large towns. At present only the usual "puffs" appear and these are not any indication as to the value and worth of a particular film. In England most of the newspapers have a regular column for film news, with a critic who contributes articles in the same way as does the musical critic.

45. (a) Yes, by means of registration, license and periodic inspection.

(b) Yes.

### **Oral Evidence of Mr. F. E. JAMES, O.B.E., General Secretary of the Young Men's Christian Association, Calcutta, on Saturday, the 17th December 1927.**

*Chairman:* I propose to trouble you only on one point as you are likely to be most intimate with that aspect of the question, I mean the effect of the film on the youths whom you come across. I suppose the cinema habit is growing popular with the youths who are in the Y. M. C. A.?

A. Yes.

Q. Do they go for the first evening performance or more often for later performances?

A. It varies a good deal, I think.

Q. I am speaking of the boarders now in your charge. Have they no time beyond which they should not stay away without the permission of the warden?

A. They have got late passes. For being out after 9 they will have to take a late pass; but before that they are free. Mostly they go to the early shows.

Q. Before the cinema came were you here at all?

A. No.

Q. I was wondering what the young men would do if the cinema were not here?

A. They would sit about and talk.

Q. And probably if their propensities so lend themselves, they might go to objectionable places?

A. Yes.

Q. The cinema from that point of view is a lesser evil than the other one?

A. In so far as it provides a cheap form of entertainment, it is a good thing.

Q. Even if there is any evil attached to it, you would consider it a lesser evil than simply idling away their time or going to objectionable places?

A. I don't think such a large number would go to objectionable places as go to the cinema. It is a new factor which has really diverted the youths to take to amusements of that sort.

Q. I suppose you frequently go to the cinema yourself?

A. I don't often go. As a rule, I only go when there is some film about which we have received a complaint. Occasionally I go for amusement.

Q. What kind of complaints do you get and from whom?

A. Occasionally I receive complaints from Bengali gentlemen who have seen the films themselves, because they know that possibly I might be able to represent those complaints in certain quarters.

Q. How long have you been here?

A. For about 8 years, always in charge of the Y. M. C. A. I happen to be at the same time Secretary of the Vigilance Association, which was responsible for getting representation on the Board of Censors.

Q. Have you had complaints very frequently or only occasionally?

A. We get only infrequent complaints, say one or two in a year.

Q. Will it be right to put it down as one or two a year?

A. About that.

Q. Were the complaints mostly relating to sex films?

A. All complaints coming from the ordinary public, i.e., from fathers and students, would have relation to sex films.

Q. Have you seen yourself any objectionable sex films?

A. There are two, especially I remember one known as the "Foolish Wives" to which I have referred in my written statement. Another film was an Indian film, the title of which I completely forget now. I saw in Dacca, about three years ago.

Q. Did it deal with love scenes?

A. It centred round life in a brothel.

Q. Was it a social drama?

A. It showed the life of a student of the Calcutta University and a public girl with whom he got mixed up.

Q. Perhaps it pointed out the dangers of unguarded youths in Calcutta. Was it the moral?

A. In the end, I believe, virtue triumphed.

Q. Probably it was a warning to parents?

A. That may have been the idea.

Q. In emphasising certain points, do you think it went beyond the legitimate stage intended as a propaganda against unguarded youth?

A. If I wanted to produce a propaganda film, I should not have chosen that particular incident or story.

Q. It was not shown in Calcutta?

A. Not to my knowledge, but those are the only two films that I remember.

Q. I suppose the film 'Foolish Wives' was shown in England?

A. I do not know, but I think it was an expensive film.

Q. Do you think it was objectionable?

A. I think it was a thoroughly bad show altogether. The story was bad, in fact the whole conception of it was bad.

Q. You don't look at it merely from the Indian point of view, but looking at it from the human point of view generally, do you think it was objectionable?

A. Looking at it from the human point of view it appeared to be objectionable.

Q. I suppose you deal mostly with college students?

A. Among the Indians I deal mostly with college students, among the Anglo Indians I deal with school boys and young apprentices in business houses and engineering firms.

Q. I suppose you have got wardens. Had you any discussion with them before sending this memorandum?

A. We had discussions among the wardens. This memorandum really represents the composite views of the wardens and of some of the older students also.

Q. I do not know, Mr. James, if you are familiar with the rules which are observed by the Censoring Board. Perhaps you would like to see them. (A copy of the rules was handed to the witness.)

A. They seem to be sufficiently comprehensive, but rules are somewhat difficult to apply in practice.

Q. You recognise the value of the film is more on the amusement side than on the educational side?

A. Yes.

Q. And in giving amusement you have to deal with the light side of life in order to make the business a paying proposition?

A. Yes, I suppose so. I believe one or two Indian films dealing with mythological stories have been very popular amongst a certain section.

Q. The difficulty is to satisfy the educated youths. They want rather fine technique, while the illiterate masses are not particular about these things. Some of the serials are being supplanted by Indian films. You see the educative value on the human mind in its various aspects. The effect produced on a cultured mind is somewhat different from that produced on an uncultured mind.

A. The film 'Foolish Wives' was, I think, cut in Bombay. It was also cut here. In fact, the whole conception was wrong.

Q. Is that the only thing that you remember as an objectionable film?

A. Yes.

Q. The difficulty is to generalise from one particular instance. You don't think that you should observe different standards of morality when dealing with college youths in India and in the west?

A. I think the Teacher's Conference which was held in London last year and also this year has been urging practically the same thing in regard to cinema censorship that has been urged in India. They hold the view that there should be stricter censorship over the portrayal of sexual emotions in the films to be shown in any country.

Q. I see you recognise that, although some people seem to suggest that you should have different standards for England and India so far as morality is concerned?

A. I think the same standard of morality should be observed. Of course, there may be particular instances in which one film might suggest one thing to a western mind and another thing to eastern mind.

Q. But don't you think the educated youth will be able to appreciate the film at its true perspective?

A. But there are a tremendous number of people whom I would call half educated, and who draw entirely wrong impressions.



**Q.** What is the remedy for that?

**A.** Fuller education on the one side and a more careful censorship on the other side. I don't say that censorship is the only way to remedy these things, it is only one of many ways.

**Q.** There are some films which exaggerate the low standard of life, I mean the underworld of Paris, New York and other places. And as our students do not generally go to the west, don't you think it is better that they should know the dangers of the west?

**A.** I have been to most cities in Europe, and I have not yet seen many of the characters so vividly portrayed in films.

**Q.** What strikes one is, that one can be too prudish in these matters, does it not?

**A.** I quite agree, and I don't think that there is such terrible danger from the cinemas in this country.

**Q.** You don't think it requires a careful watch, and having looked up the rules, you don't think anything more can be added to them?

**A.** I have not studied the rules fully. I have only just glanced at them, and they appear to me to be quite comprehensive. All that I would say is that care should be exercised by the Censors especially in regard to the display of sex emotions.

**Q.** Then do you think that each film should be viewed by two or three responsible members of the Board which might involve some trouble and delay?

**A.** I don't know sufficient about the working of the Board, and I doubt whether it is practicable to find people who have time to do that.

**Q.** Can you find people in Calcutta who can spare the time, say two or three hours for two days in the week?

**A.** It is very difficult indeed.

**Q.** I don't mind so much about Europeans engaged in business. What do you think of Indians here, will you be able to find suitable men here to work on the Censor Board?

**A.** I think it would be difficult, if not impossible, to find the right sort of men to do that kind of work.

**Q.** I suppose you think that professors of colleges, vakils, and High Court pleaders and people of that class would be eligible to sit on the Censorship Board?

**A.** Yes, but there should be representatives who know the student world to view the films intended for them.

**Q.** You cannot speak so much from information or knowledge about other classes of people, but you can speak positively about the student class in Calcutta and of those who are employed in the firms?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** What sort of effect does the cinema produce on the Anglo-Indian youth? Do you think he suffers more than the Indian youth or is likely to suffer more because he has got greater freedom with the opposite sex than the Indian youth?

**A.** I think they are very impressionable. But it is an extraordinarily difficult question to answer by a general statement, because the Anglo-Indian community itself is amazingly diverse. On one side, you may get people whose impressions will be very similar to those made upon the mind of an Indian; on the other, you will probably get an Anglo-Indian boy whose impressions will be much more similar to the impression upon the mind of an European boy. Generally speaking, I think the Anglo-Indian in adolescence is very impressionable both in regard to sex matters and in regard to sensational crimes.

**Q.** What do you mean by sensational films, do you mean depicting crime?

**A.** Yes.

Q. Are there many shown here? We are told they are becoming less popular?

A. Judging from the pictures and advertisements published, I think they are still fairly popular in the north end of Calcutta.

Q. Indian films are replacing them there, are they not?

A. Yes.

Q. I take it, then, that your general view is that more careful censorship should be continued?

A. Yes, and there should be people on the Board who are in closer touch with Indian life and boy life in a place like Calcutta; there should be more members from the parent and teacher class put on the Board.

Q. Would you advocate a stronger Indian element on the Board?

A. Yes, and I also think there ought to be one Indian lady on the Board. At the same time, I would emphasise the point that there should be a stronger representation of educational interests and those who are actually dealing with students.

Q. Is there not then a danger of the cinema going down to the level of the school masters or the school room.

A. That may be, and we do not want to regard it entirely from the school master's point of view.

Q. It may kill the trade?

A. You want people who know more about the cinema and also about student life.

Mr. Green: You told us that you sometimes get complaints from parents. I presume that you pass them over to the Board?

A. Yes.

Q. Did you complain to the Board about this particular film 'Foolish Wives'?

A. I wrote to the Board, and they wrote back to me saying that they had already cut it, though it was already cut in Bombay.

Q. I gather from your statement that you are generally satisfied with the Bengal Board?

A. Yes.

Q. On the other hand, your statement gives me the impression, though you have not stated specifically, that you are far from satisfied with the Bombay Board?

A. That is the impression I have.

Q. I might read to you a remark made in an official communication two years ago by the Church Missionary Society, Exhibition Department, in which they say that the best control exercised is in the Bombay Presidency. I don't want to labour this point.

A. I am glad to hear it. I have seen films passed in Bombay which have been cut in Bengal. "Scaramouche" was cut on political grounds. "Foolish Wives" was cut on sexual grounds. The other two I don't remember.

Q. You were doubtful whether it would be possible to get respectable ladies and gentlemen of the requisite standard to censor every film before it is certified?

A. What I meant was that if there were going to be only 7 people to see all the films it would probably be a big job.

Q. The actual amount of work done in Bengal during the last three years is this: they examined about a million and half feet the year before last, one million ninety three thousand feet last year and 2½ million feet this year. This year's figure represents something over 2 hours inspection a day, and the work is likely to increase. Now the only way in which you could get people would be to have a very large panel representing all interests?

A. It is doubtful, because, first of all, there should be a certain amount of continuity of service, and, secondly, the Board should not be too big.

*Chairman:* Would you consider 10 members too many?

A. No.

*Mr. Green:* Take it at 10, and that will mean over an hour's work every week if only one member of the Board saw each film?

A. I think it is doubtful whether that would work actually in practice.

Q. Do you think you can get such members if they are paid?

A. I think it would be a pity if you made the service a paid one in the ordinary sense.

Q. The people whom you will want on the Board should be men of wide culture, and can you expect such people to surrender a good portion of their time for this class of work?

A. I don't think you can. I think the present arrangement in Bengal can be continued. You have a stipendiary staff here, and if there is any doubt regarding any film, it is referred to the whole Board which then sees it. I think such an arrangement would work better in practice.

Q. And then if there is any doubt at all, members of the Board would have to see the film. Probably in practice that would work better? That is the practice in Bengal and also in Bombay.

A. My impression is that would work better.

Q. In fact, stipendiary censors with an advisory board to come in on any questions of doubt. You also want a central stipendiary board with appellate work only, in case of disagreement?

A. It appears to me that a Central Board doing the whole of the censoring work for India would be an extraordinarily difficult thing from the trade point of view.

Q. If we could avoid the trade difficulty would you be in favour of a Central Board? It would give you still greater uniformity.

A. Yes, I would be.

*Colonel Crauford:* Would you suggest that this central appellate authority might also act as a co-ordinating authority between the various boards?

A. I think I have said that somewhere.

Q. I gather that you think that, even with the canons of censorship laid down, at the moment certain scenes which are generally undesirable slip through in larger quantities than they ought to?

A. Yes.

Q. Would you suggest that if we are to have stipendiary censors we have to get men with the requisite qualification and culture and pay them fairly highly?

A. Yes, you have.

Q. To-day the salary is Rs. 300—500 in Bombay, Rs. 300 here for part-time. What would you suggest as being a salary for which we can get men with the requisite qualification. Can you give us any idea?

A. It is difficult to say. If he is a man who is recruited in India from abroad you would have to pay more than you would a man recruited in India.

Q. I was thinking of India, not abroad.

A. There are Indian inspectors, as a matter of fact.

Q. If you have somebody of educational qualifications and of culture you would have to pay a rate which he would probably get in his own market.

*Chairman:* Would a man like the warden of one of your hostels not be a man of sufficient qualifications?

A. The wardens in our hostels are not paid at their market rate.

Q. I know, but men of that type would be suitable?

A. Some of them.

*Mr. Green:* Are these gentlemen with western experience as well?

A. Yes. Most of the men in responsible positions are men who have been to the west.

Q. I think a salary of Rs. 500 would attract a man in Calcutta.

A. I should put it higher to get a really good man in Calcutta. I should start it at 600, say 600 to 900. Something like that.

*Colonel Crawford*: Are you of opinion that the European community are not altogether satisfied with the display of sex emotion on the film?

A. Yes.

Q. You would agree that the display of sex emotion by Indians is exceedingly modest?

A. Yes, that is, from what I have seen. You mean in ordinary life?

Q. I don't mean so much in ordinary life, but that the Indian generally is very modest in the public exhibition of his sex emotion.

A. Oh! yes.

Q. You would feel inclined to agree that the objection of the community on the subject of films is that they recognise that fact of Indian life and consider that our standards in India should conform in public very largely to Indian requirements.

A. Yes, I think that is one of the very strong feelings, and also, I think, along side of that is the normal protest of the average European against vulgarity even amongst his own people.

*Chairman*: Why don't they try it in their own country, the Europeans? Don't you think that is the more legitimate course?

A. I think they are trying. But I think there is a feeling here among Europeans that there are certain things which possibly are natural in the western countries which here appear to be vulgar.

Q. But don't you think such objection should apply more to the producer than to the countries where it is exhibited?

A. Yes, I think if you can appeal to the producer, you would be striking at the root.

*Colonel Crawford*: You would be inclined to agree that many Europeans consider that this exhibition of sex emotions is rather a libel on the normal life of the west?

A. Certainly.

Q. You consider that many communities in India, Hindu, Mussulman and European, have a certain amount of justice in objecting to misrepresentation of their own life on the cinema?

A. Certainly.

Q. Now, seeing that generally our standards of censorship on paper now appear satisfactory but that in practice we find a larger percentage of films of low moral standard slip through than ought to, have you any suggestions to make as to how that can be dealt with?

A. It is an extraordinary difficult question from the censor's point of view. If you can deal with the producer, so much the better.

Q. In India. But we have no control over the producers outside the country.

A. For instance, I have seen pictures—I have discussed this matter with people who have been on the board. They say, "Well now, here is a theme and there are certain things which are not particularly good. We cut them out. Well, once you go on cutting out, you find yourself left with nothing at all, and the story is gone." And that is how a number of objectionable scenes get left in.

Q. But suppose the censor says: this is objectionable and we propose to ban it, and in future it is up to you to see that you are not put to any loss by importing such films. Wouldn't that be the actual result?

A. I think it would have a very good effect if one or two films were entirely banned.

**Chairman:** Don't you think it would have a better effect if it was done in their own country?

**A.** If you can. But how can you do it?

**Q.** Do you think you are going to get much assistance from public criticism? Do you think the public will come forward to criticise freely?

**A.** They are not inclined. Several people have written to me during the last few years about pictures they have objected to, and I have written and asked for particulars, and that has been the end of it. That is really the general attitude. They are not satisfied, but the feeling is not strong enough to urge them to take definite action. They won't take the trouble to put it down.

**Mr. Neogy:** Are you aware, Mr. James, that in the recent Bengali literature, there has been a greater freedom in the treatment of sex relations than before?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** I mean the sexual novels?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** And I suppose that is also a feature of western literature to a certain extent. That is the latest tendency?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** And these books are available to the boys?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Now, supposing one of these stories is represented on the stage—a dramatised version—would you object to your boys seeing that representation on the stage? Supposing you don't object to his reading the book?

**A.** No, provided the portrayal is a good one.

**Q.** Then again, supposing the portrayal is not unsatisfactory from your point of view, on the stage, would you adopt a different standard for the screen version of that very same story? That is to say, supposing the screen version tallies with the stage version and you allow the stage version, would you allow the screen version too? Supposing it is a faithful reproduction of the stage version?

**A.** Probably not.

**Q.** I put this question because one of the inspectors employed by the Board of Censors here made the statement the other day that they applied a more stringent standard of censorship to films than to the stage. I don't know why. I put a definite question to him. A well-known Bengali drama was represented on the screen—"Prafulla". A very well-known tragic drama. And the Board made certain cuts and in justification of it the inspector said "we adopt a more stringent standard in regard to the film than in regard to the stage."

**A.** Well, in one sense. Of course, on the stage a word or phrase may explain something, but on the film it is an action that has to explain and convey that something to the mind. It is quite conceivable that when a description becomes an action on the film it might be objectionable.

**Q.** No, but the justification he gave was that the screen makes a wider appeal than the stage which appeals only to a limited class.

**A.** That would be a very weak argument.

**Chairman:** Probably that is also the reason why action should be emphasised.

**Mr. Neogy:** In order to make up for the absence of the spoken word?

**A.** Yes.

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**Written Statement of Mr. S. A. ALLEY, Manager, Purna Theatre, Bhowanipore, Calcutta, dated the 13th December 1927.**

1. I have. I have been interested in its exhibition section for the last 6 years, having been in charge of a circuit of 4 theatres in the mofussil, later

manager of 2 cinemas in Rangoon, senior assistant and officiating manager of a Film Renting office in the same city, and now manager of a local cinema.

2. (a) I should think that Indians of the educated classes consider cinemas a very popular form of amusement, while the illiterate classes frequent cinemas to an equally large extent when serials, comedies or films of an adventurous type are shown. My statements refer to Calcutta and Rangoon.

(b) The composition of the audience depends entirely on the class and nature of films exhibited.

(c) Personally I would not place it at a higher percentage than about 3 per cent., again dependent on the nature of films exhibited.

#### PART I.

3. To the cultured and educated Indian, I should think the superior class of Western features and social subjects, or adaptations of well-known literary and classical works of fiction.

To the masses, serials, adventurous subjects, comedies, and Indian productions based on mythological themes.

4. I should say they are catering fairly adequately. Of course, there is a dearth of Indian productions in certain provinces, which would otherwise prove very welcome to the masses.

5. Indian films are available no doubt; but under certain conditions which occasionally make it impracticable for an exhibitor to book them.

(a) There is ample room for improvement, in every way: photography, acting, settings, etc.

(b) Very much so with certain sections of the Indian people.

(c) It is more profitable to exhibit Indian subjects; but only in theatres where the audiences are preponderantly Indian. In cinemas where the Europeans congregate in large numbers, the exhibition of an Indian film would prove a failure.

"Krishna Kanta's Will," "Jaidev," "England—Returned," "Jasoda Nandan" are a few of the outstanding successes in Bengal.

6. (a) In fact they are more popular with the Indian masses.

(b) (1) to the educated classes, adaptations of well-known Indian novels by famous Indian authors, and historical subjects.

(2) to the illiterate population, mythological subjects with a strong religious appeal.

7. I have no experience in this direction and would therefore rather not express any opinion.

8. (a) While distribution and exhibition are tolerably satisfactory, in my opinion, film production is in a very nascent stage and there is ample room for improvement therein.

(b) This may be due to the fact that very few of the local producers understand the technique of production, while photography except in rare instances leaves much to be desired. The only method by which we can improve the quality of films produced in India and help the development of the industry, is by sending out intelligent young Indians to foreign countries and centres of production, to enable them to learn the technique of production. One point needs stressing in this connection. Just sending out one or two men to study all the branches of production, would be futile, as the accumulative result would be negligible. Each individual should be made to study one specific branch of production. For instance, one man should only devote himself to photographic work, another to directorial study, yet another to artificial lighting and mechanical work. Each of these branches needs highly specialised knowledge and as such should be studied separately by aspirants who have an aptitude for any special line.

9. Not always; because of the prohibitive prices charged by the renters and distributors, which it is not always practicable for the exhibitor to pay, unless he is desirous of pursuing of a suicidal policy.

The excessive customs duty and the fantastic royalties demanded by foreign exporters and producers are, to a great extent, responsible for this state of affairs.

I do not think so.

10. Yes, but not to a very large extent, and where it exists it is inevitable.

11. The system of block and blind booking is distinctly disadvantageous to the exhibitors, as the latter are thereby expected to book films without having an opportunity of judging whether such films will necessarily appeal to the special class of audience to which they cater, and ultimately results in financial loss to him. It is, of course, of benefit to the producer since it means that he has, on the strength of a few good films, disposed off his entire output of fair and indifferent subjects as well. There is no help for it, owing to keen competition in the market to secure films of a well-known brand.

11. Not by any means, except second-run houses. Where such facilities are offered the rates charged are proportionately high.

12. To a great extent, for the simple and most potent reason that it effects adversely, the receipts at the box office. If the exhibitor is catering to a clientele which is composed mainly of the middle and poorer classes, it is an effective obstacle to better business, for if the lower classes are full, the patrons cannot afford to purchase higher priced seats, owing to the additional amusement tax.

13. The present tariff duties is another factor which hits the exhibitor badly, since the importers raise their rentals accordingly. It further has a very prejudicial effect on the importer on a small scale, who sometimes has to pay duty representing probably 5 to 10 times the actual cost of the film itself.

I would suggest that Tariff should be charged *ad valorem*, that posters and other publicity matter should be duty free, since the latter constitute the most important factor in fetching inadequate returns.

14. Certainly. I think there is, specially in the mill and mines areas.

15. India is eminently suitable for film production on a large scale. Climatically it is the film producer's paradise, while its wealth of architectural resources would help greatly in minimising production costs. Atmosphere and background, both occidental and oriental, is easily available.

16. Not at the moment. They have yet a lot to learn the whole lot of them, and they should be encouraged to do so and sent to foreign countries. There are producers and directors, actors and actresses, of course, but few of them are sufficiently well equipped with specialised knowledge of their respective branches, which would make a large producing plant in this country a really successful commercial venture, unless it was manned by experts.

The only measure which I can suggest is covered by my answer to question No. 8 (b). There is the alternative that foreign experts may be imported from centres of production; but I doubt if this can be done as real experts draw such extensive salaries in their own countries that it would be foolish to expect them to come to India on tremendously reduced salaries. That no existing producing unit in India can afford to pay even half or quarter of their salaries is an admitted fact.

17. Capital is always shy in these matters, but if proper safeguards and facilities offer and they can be convinced of the success of the venture as a commercial proposition, I do not think it will be difficult to raise the necessary money.

18. Certainly. Reduction or abolition of duty on raw film; using its influence with the American, German, and British Governments with a view to obtaining their co-operation in providing facilities for young aspirants from here, to study the various branches of production in studios of the various countries. Providing scholarships to enable students to pursue such studies.

19. The cost of film production in this country is infinitely cheaper than that of any other country. In fact there is no comparison. Probably the entire cost of a film produced in this country would not come to a quarter of the average monthly salary of an ordinary featured hero or heroine in a film, in America or England. I am, of course, excluding the salaries of such world renowned stars as Chaplin, Fairbanks, Mary Pickford, and others, whose pay is fantastically high.

20. (a) My proposals do not involve *expenditure* from existing funds (except in the case of scholarships); but they will mean reduction in the *revenue*, which after all should to some extent be spent to better the industry from which it is derived, and which will not seriously prejudice the other needs of the country.

(b) If the entertainment tax is not abolished some of the expenditure may well be drafted from this source, while the censorship fees and the tariff duties should contribute somewhat to meet such expenditure.

21. I am most certainly against the creation of a State Monopoly of the Film Industry, as I understand it. Once there is a monopoly there will be no competition and automatically the incentive for progress and development will vanish, to a large extent. Besides it will necessitate, if the monopoly is to be thoroughly successful, a vast expenditure on the part of the Government in buying up the existing companies—such sumptuous expenditure being hardly worth while considering the other needs of the country. Government help can, however, be given in a more useful and economical, though less spectacular, manner by providing scholarships for students abroad. This will benefit the industry much more in providing trained and expert officials in the very branch which most needs the services of such men.

22. I do not advocate compulsion of any form in any industry, and, therefore, would not advise compulsorily participating in the policy of the Imperial Conference.

Merely exhibiting a certain percentage of British productions would not help the film industry in India in the slightest, or assist in its development, unless Indian productions were given equally preferential treatment in the British and Commonwealth film markets. This cannot happen unless and until Indian films are produced of a sufficiently high standard as to be readily saleable in foreign markets, which again will not come to pass till the producing section is manned by trained and capable experts.

23. To a great extent, as the film is recognised to be the greatest and most powerful medium of both propaganda and education.

## PART II.

24. (a) I do not think so; because such films if any are not certified for public exhibition by the censor boards.

(b) Not to my knowledge; nor do I think such films are ever imported.

(c) Films where racial distinctions are raised to the detriment of the Asiatic; where the Oriental is always depicted as villainous character. In the present state of the country it creates dissatisfaction and further unrest and tends to alienate the sympathies of the Indian from the Westerner.

(d) I consider the censorship as it stands quite adequate. Further tightening would only cripple the industry all the more.

(e) Not that I know of; though this information would better be available from the Police and Criminal authorities.

25. This is being sufficiently well-handled by the existing censorship rules.

26. (a) Religious films should, of course, be given special attention considering the state of communal tension in the country and care should be taken that no film which is likely to wound, even in the remotest degree, the religious susceptibilities of any section or community, be permitted to be publicly exhibited.

(b) I am not aware of any.



27. I do not think so. This will be evident from the fact that the films are produced in Europe and America, both of which countries know full well what is the existing standard of civilization in the West. Apart from that, each film is reviewed by the National Boards of Review, both in England and America, and certified as suitable for public exhibition. Only then are such films imported here. It stands to reason that these representative boards of review would not pass anything which appeared to them a misrepresentation of existing conditions in the West. It should be remembered that films are produced for practically 40,000 theatres (20,500 in America and 19,500 in Europe) in Europe and America and not expressly for India, which boasts but an insignificant 400 theatres—not even  $\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. of the theatres actually catered for—and it is idle to suggest or suppose that foreign films were made expressly to misrepresent Western civilization for this infinitesimal number of theatres in India.

28. Not that I know of.

29. Yes, such films as convey a vital moral based on sexual themes, which can only be correctly understood by adults.

30. It is impracticable.

31. Yes.

32. Quite satisfactory.

33. (a) Yes.

(b) Most certainly.

(c) It would be a great impediment.

34. (a) No. Because it would cause inconvenience to the Trade and mean sending films to a fixed centre for certification, resulting in the film being idle for a considerable period, during which period it might be earning hire.

(b) No, because it would entail further expenditure which is not warranted.

(c) I do not advocate it at all.

35. (a) I should think it is.

(b) No.

36. (a) Quite satisfactory. With regard to the qualifications, that is a doubtful question. Breath of vision, good education and culture and freedom from petty, narrow-minded prejudices are essential qualifications.

(b) I do not think consider it necessary, if the Inspector embodies in himself the qualifications mentioned above.

37. (a) Yes, there are sufficient safeguards.

(b) Yes, in the interests of the importer. The point will be clear from the following example:—

If a film is banned in one province and permitted in another it means that no refund of the cost price can be obtained from the exporters or producers, nor can it be returned to the latter and the proportionate tariff duty recovered. The producer contends that the film has been shown in India—at least in some parts thereof—and refuses a refund. It stands to reason that if a film is presented and exploited only in certain provinces, then the income accruing from such circulation and exploitation is far short of the expected returns if exhibited throughout India. Consequently films should be either banned for good once it is banned by any censoring authority of any province, or be considered valid for presentation throughout India, once it has been so certified by any duly constituted Board of Censors.

38. Many, though I do not now remember the names.

39. Not to my knowledge.

40. I do not think there is any need at all. In fact it would be crippling the most potent medium of fetching returns, since advertisement is the life and soul of the showman's business.

41. There has been a change for the better since the establishment of the National Boards of Review in England and America.

42. Yes. When a film is considered by the Board to be objectionable, a further viewing should be held at which members of the press, other exhibitors and importers, together with the Board may see the film and if the majority of those present still consider the film objectionable the subject should be banned; but otherwise it should be certified.

43. (a) No need. Censorship provides efficient control.

44. This is covered by my answer to question No. 42.

45. I do not advocate any further control over the film producing industry than is at present exercised by the Censorship Authorities and the other licences already existing.

### **Oral Evidence of Mr. S. A. ALLEY, Manager, Purna Theatre, on Saturday, the 17th December 1927.**

*Chairman:* You are the manager of the Purna Theatre?

A. Yes.

Q. Your father is the proprietor?

A. No, no, not my father. I have no relationship with the proprietor.

Q. Oh, I see. You are the manager. You are running the theatre for him?

A. Yes.

Q. It is an independent theatre? It is not under the control of Madans?

A. No.

Q. Nor are you under the Globe?

A. No, entirely independent.

Q. Were you connected with the cinema before you became manager of this concern?

A. Yes, here in India as well as in Burma. I have said that in my replies.

Q. And is it a paying proposition to run cinemas generally?

A. Well, that depends more or less upon the locality where it is run. It is not a paying proposition everywhere. It is only a paying proposition where you have got a cinema-going audience.

Q. I mean your experience both in Calcutta and Rangoon is that it is a paying proposition?

A. Yes.

Q. And cinemas are multiplying and growing in number?

A. Yes, to a certain extent. I would not make a sweeping statement to that effect.

Q. Now, how many cinemas have grown in the last three years in Calcutta itself? Have any new cinemas come into existence?

A. Not to my knowledge. The same number of cinemas continue, only the proprietorship has changed hands.

Q. But the number has not increased?

A. No.

Q. When did the last new cinema theatre come into existence?—in Calcutta.

A. I was here in the year 1924. Since then, of course, I have been in Burma. As far as I am aware the only theatre that came into existence was the Empress Theatre, that is the immediate opposition theatre to the Purna Theatre—the one in my locality.

Q. When was it opened?

A. I have no exact recollection. But after the Russa Theatre came into existence.

Q. That was about 4 years ago?

A. Yes, I should say so.

Q. And do you think there is a demand for new theatres? Do you think if new theatres are opened in Calcutta, it will pay?

A. No, I don't think so. I think Calcutta has got more theatres than there is need for.

Q. Then do you mean to say that some of the theatres are run at a loss?

A. I should think so. Every theatre is not paying, that is certain.

Q. But the Purna is doing well?

A. Purna is paying its way. I would not say that it is paying a very profitable dividend on the outlay but it is just meeting expenses. And that is just possible because we don't pay any hire.

Q. Do you keep accounts or returns of your theatre?

A. This is only the first year it has been in existence. Before that, it was the Russa Theatre, run by a limited company and the limited company went into liquidation.

Q. Did they only run one theatre?

A. Yes. The Paris Cinema and Varieties, Ltd. controlled that theatre.

Q. Did they have any other business?

A. Not as far as I am aware. And it ended in loss, and so they had to wind it up, and the present purchaser took it over.

Q. What did he pay for it?

A. He did not buy the theatre. He leased it out on a monthly rental. The building was and is the property of the present proprietor and had been leased out on a monthly rental to the Paris Cinema and Varieties, Ltd. The building belongs to the present proprietor who is running this theatre.

Q. He himself was the proprietor before, and that company having failed, he has taken it over and so it is not a voluntary purchased theatre? He is more or less forced to run the theatre which somebody else built.

A. Yes, he received offers for rentals by other companies, but it did not come up to his expectation, so he carried it on.

Q. Who offered to lease it?

A. Madans Theatre offered to lease it.

Q. And you say it was not a fair amount which was offered?

A. I am not aware of the actual offers made but what I can gather is that the amount did not come up to the expectations of the proprietor. Of course, I am not in a position to speak with certainty on this point.

Q. Don't bother. Now you get your pictures on hire for running them in the Purna?

A. Invariably.

Q. Do you buy any pictures or import any pictures yourself?

A. No. We intended to, but we did not.

Q. What have you to pay for the hire? Percentage basis or rent?

A. Both on the percentage basis as well as on the rental basis.

Q. You don't find any difficulty in getting pictures?

A. No.

Q. With whom do you deal generally?

A. Mostly with the Universal Pictures Corporation, partly with the Globe.

Q. And you get the sort of pictures you want without any difficulty?

A. Oh, yes, except Indian productions which we don't get very often.

Q. Did you try the Bombay market?

A. Well, there is this one point—films produced in India have provincial restrictions.

Q. I mean did you try at all?

A. We have endeavoured to obtain films from Bombay but were held back owing to one or two restrictions. One was that Bombay producers wanted a lump sum guaranteed hire and another was that often when they were prepared to let us have films on a percentage basis, they wanted a cash deposit of so many thousands. That is impracticable for a small concern like ours. We could not possibly entertain the proposal.

Q. Did anyone try showing Bombay films here?

A. Bombay films have been shown in Calcutta, but only in certain quarters.

Q. What quarters?

A. The northern quarter.

Q. The Imperial Theatre?

A. The northern quarter is a very large area. When I say northern quarter I mean the Imperial Theatre, where you get the majority of Marhatis and Marawari audience. It is non-Bengali. That is what I mean when I say they have provincial restrictions. A picture produced in Bengal would not go very well in Bombay, nor in Burma.

Q. I mean, you don't speak from experience.

A. Oh, yes, I speak from experience.

Q. Well, tell us any instance where you tried a Bombay film here?

A. I have not tried it in my own theatre. I have received reports. For instance, when I was in Burma a film was sent from Burma—an Indian subject produced in Burma, and it was sent to Bombay, it was sent as well to Calcutta, but in Calcutta they could not get a market and when they got a market in Bombay the results were absolutely disappointing. It was produced by a Burmese film company by the name of "The London Art Film Co."

Q. What was the subject?

A. I forget the subject. It was a social subject more than anything else. I forget the name actually.

Q. You have that in mind. But you cannot say that any of your friends actually tried it and it was definitely a failure?

A. I am telling you this is the report I received when I was in Rangoon itself. I was there—I helped in the production which was sent out to Bombay. Of course, I will admit that the technique and quality was not up to the present standard.

Q. That has risen. Have you seen any of the Bombay films yourself?

A. I have.

Q. Where did you see them?

A. In Rangoon.

Q. Were they popular in Rangoon?

A. They went fairly well. But there also the Bombay class of audience turned up. There is a very large section of Gujarati people in Rangoon. They turned up.

Q. You liked it?

A. I liked it. But I looked at it from a very critical point of view. I went there to see if it was possible to do business with that picture and it did not come up to expectations.

Q. You mean in the technique? I mean, we don't find that difficulty in Madras. That is why I press you on the point. Bombay films are very popular. They draw huge crowds.

A. I am not aware, of course. I have no experience of Madras.

*Q.* It was the same in the Punjab, in Peshawar. I was trying to find out whether it is not a mere Bengali idea. Outside Bengal we don't find that.

*A.* Quite likely. That may be so.

*Q.* Something peculiar to Bengal fashion. My friend, Mr. Neogy, also seems to think so.

*A.* Of course, I have no experience of Bombay or Madras, so I am not in a position to speak on that point.

*Q.* Do you know if any Bengal production was exhibited outside? Madans' or anybody else's? Were they shown in Rangoon?

*A.* Oh, yes, Bengal productions were shown in Rangoon. There is quite a large Bengali audience in Rangoon.

*Q.* But was it not popular with other sections at all?

*A.* I don't know because I didn't bother my head. I didn't go myself. It didn't interest me at the time. That they have been shown is a fact.

*Q.* There is a dearth of Indian productions according to you?

*A.* Yes, in this respect.

*Q.* And you think, having regard to the popularity of Indian films there would be a great demand for Indian films if they could be produced?

*A.* There is one other difficulty. When we go to Bombay and Madras—we don't have vernacular titles in Bengali; I have approached the producers on this point, but then they want us to pay the cost of the preparation of those titles.

*Q.* Probably because they have got their own market. They do not look out for other markets apparently. They have got a quota with their own market.

*A.* They get their returns all right. They are not very anxious to expand their market.

*Mr. Neogy:* What about the film that was shown in Rangoon? Had it any different titles?

*A.* The Bombay one, I remember it had titles in English, Gujarati and Hindi.

*Q.* And that appealed to the Burma audience?

*A.* Not to the Burmans, but to the Marhati and Gujarati sections of the Burmese community.

*Chairman:* Of course, there is an Indian population in Rangoon. It is more or less an Indian city.

*Mr. Neogy:* Do you resort to the block system in booking?

*A.* No, I don't resort to that.

*Q.* And you are not compelled to by any firm?

*A.* No.

*Q.* You get what pictures you want and make your own selection after seeing the trade reports?

*A.* Of course, the hire that they get from my theatre is a very negligible one. I am the only independent second-run house. So I can pick and choose whatever I like. But my theatre is no criterion of judgment. If another independent second-run theatre sprang up to-morrow things might not be so smooth or easy as they at present are.

*Q.* You get only second-run pictures?

*A.* That is why. Even when they want less for a first-run picture, I cannot afford to pay for it.

*Q.* What is it that they demand?

*A.* Anything from Rs. 500 to Rs. 2,000 for four days, with a proportionate increase if you extend it to a week.

*Q.* But if you take a second-run picture what do you pay?

A. I usually pay a very nominal sum.

Q. How much do you pay?

A. Between a hundred and two hundred for four days.

Q. It won't pay you to take any pictures paying such high rates?

A. No. When questions are raised with regard to the high rate, the only way I can do it is to go on the percentage basis.

Q. You deal with all the importers here?

A. I deal with any importer who is prepared to meet me.

Q. So you are able to get your pictures. You are apparently the only independent man in Calcutta who wants them.

A. And after the first run it is very easy to get it.

Q. You mean after it has already been run in the Calcutta theatres and other parts.

A. Exactly.

Q. And still you get an audience?

A. Oh, yes.

Q. I suppose you show Indian films also?

A. Whenever I can get them. So far we have shown three Indian pictures in the last 18 months.

Q. All Bengal productions?

A. Yes.

Q. What have you to pay for an Indian picture?

A. Well, the demand is sometimes prohibitive but when it comes down to facts I simply say: run it on percentage.

Q. Produced by whom?

A. Produced by the Aurora Cinema Co.

Q. And what percentage do you give them?

A. 40.

Q. And you retain 60?

A. Yes.

Q. Of the gross receipts?

A. Yes. I bear all the expenses, advertisements and all.

Q. And do you know if there is any other theatre which pays like that to the Indian producer?

A. There is no other independent theatre in Calcutta.

Q. But take the Madans' theatres. Do they show Indian films at all?

A. Oh, yes, quite a number of them.

Q. Their own productions?

A. Their own as well as outside productions. The two films now being shown are outside productions, not their own,—“Sankaracharya” and “Incarnation.”

Q. But in past years, did they show any productions that were not their own?

A. Oh, yes. They got some from Bombay and showed them.

Q. On several occasions?

A. I don't remember actually. But I remember seeing some productions; some were at the Alfred Theatre, some at the Imperial. I am not in a position to give you exact facts and figures.

Q. But there is a complaint which has been made that the Indian producer finds it difficult to exhibit his pictures here in Calcutta.

A. Well, you see, there is this fact, that there is one controlling unit and that unit controls a number of theatres. Naturally the Indian producer has to go to him if he wants to realise more money.

**Q.** What class of people go to your theatres?

**A.** That depends on the class of picture. When I show serials I get the illiterate classes as a rule.

**Q.** Do you show serials very often?

**A.** No. Whenever I find the box receipts are falling a bit I put up a serial. We get the actual masses then.

**Q.** They do not come for these social dramas?

**A.** No.

**Q.** They are not affected by these social dramas?

**A.** No.

**Q.** Who patronise western social dramas?

**A.** Mostly educated class who understand and follow captions.

**Q.** Bhowanipore is the place where the vakils live and other educated people?

**A.** Not only vakils, but the clerical class, the middle class population, students, etc.

**Q.** They are able to follow and understand?

**A.** Yes, and appreciate.

**Q.** Do you think they misunderstand the western civilisation?

**A.** I do not think so.

**Q.** You do not misunderstand yourself?

**A.** No.

**Mr. Green:** Have you been to the west?

**A.** Yes.

**Chairman:** Where were you?

**A.** In London itself for some time. I was in Belgium for some time, and also in France for a short period.

**Q.** When you went there had you an interest in this industry?

**A.** When I went there I was not at all interested in this industry. I went there for some private reason.

**Q.** You think the cinema has no evil effect?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Or a tendency in that direction?

**A.** No.

**Q.** What percentage of sex films do you show?

**A.** What do you mean by sex films?

**Q.** Where there are passionate love-making scenes, kissing—not the ordinary kissing, but kissing passionately, all over the body.

**A.** I do not think I have shown more than two or three of that during all this period.

**Q.** Kissing going on all over the body, kissing on the neck, shoulder and so on.

**A.** I have not seen any.

**Q.** You consider "The Blue Danube" as a sex film from that point of view?

**A.** If a film becomes a sex film merely by the intensity of kissing, then I would consider it such.

**Q.** You would consider that film as a sex film?

**A.** As you look at it.

**Q.** You do not consider there are any objectionable scenes there at all?

**A.** No.

**Q.** I saw "The Blue Danube" in your theatre. The audience was mostly educated people, and there were no illiterate people.

A. They would not go to these pictures. If you want the masses to come, either have Indian pictures or pictures of an adventurous type.

Q. Is that your experience both here and in Rangoon?

A. Yes.

Q. Do Indian ladies attend your theatres much?

A. Yes, but only when Indian films are shown. If you show a Bengali production with Bengali sub-titles—either a mythological subject or one based on popular novels,—we get a very large percentage of zenana audience. In fact, I might say the zenana audience then is more than the male audience. I am talking of my own theatre, and it is sometimes difficult to control the rush at such times.

Q. You think the censorship is adequate as it is?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you think it is too strict?

A. I would like it to be a little less strict.

Q. From what point of view?

A. Their decisions need not be arbitrary at certain times—banning an entire film when the deletion of just a few scenes might do.

Q. I suppose you never applied for censorship for yourself?

A. I have applied for censorship not on my own behalf?

Q. In Calcutta?

A. Yes.

Q. And you think they are too strict?

A. I should think so.

Q. What is it you have in mind?

A. Let me give you a concrete example. You take that film, "Orphans of the Storm." That was shown for ten days and then it was banned. I do not understand why it was banned.

Q. Was there any complaint about it?

A. Not that I know of.

Q. Was it on communal grounds?

A. There were some scenes with regard to the French Revolution and I think it was because of those scenes it has been banned.

Mr. Neogy: The reason was political?

A. It must have been political. I cannot tell you what actuated the banning of that film. It was shown in the Madan Theatre and Palace of Varieties where the Europeans generally go. It ran for ten days and then it was banned.

Chairman: You did not apply for its censorship?

A. No.

Q. But what is the case which you said you had in mind?

A. That is one. I am just giving you an instance of what I consider to be arbitrary.

Q. Arbitrary in the sense that it was banned on political grounds?

A. I do not know.

Q. How do you know then that it was arbitrary?

A. It was first shown and then it was banned.

Q. It may be because some community objected?

A. In that light I may have to modify my opinion. I personally have had no experience.

Q. In fact you have had no occasion to apply for censorship?

A. No.

Q. You had no occasion to get films censored?



A. No.

*Mr. Neogy*: Are you a native of Bengal?

A. I was born and bred in Burma.

*Q.* Can you tell me from your experience whether you find that a Bengali audience is more critical with regard to the story portion of the film, technique and other things, than any other audience of which you have experience?

A. It is rather a large question.

*Q.* I do not understand the exact reason why Bombay pictures do not appeal to Bengal. Is it because the Bengal audience is more critical?

A. No. I think it is because the Bengal audience is more conservative in their likes and dislikes. They would prefer to see a Bengali production than a Bombay production.

*Chairman*: They are more patriotic?

A. Yes.

*Mr. Neogy*: Is it also because the Bengali literature has attained an excellence which has not been attained by any other vernacular literature?

A. The average Bengali is not familiar with the vernacular literature of other places than Bengal. That might to a certain extent explain.

*Q.* Do you think provincial peculiarities stand in the way even of mythological plays?

A. Yes.

*Q.* You state that the terms which the Bombay producer lays down are very stringent or hard. Is it because yours is a new concern, or are those also the terms on which the Madans get their films from them?

A. I have no idea.

*Q.* The Russa Theatre was the predecessor of the Purna Theatre?

A. Yes.

*Q.* It was not merely a cinema theatre but it used to have variety shows also?

A. Now and then.

*Q.* And there used to be ballet dances there?

A. Quite likely.

*Q.* In the approved European style?

A. Yes.

*Q.* With all that they could not make a success of it?

A. Yes.

*Q.* Is there anything in the license to prevent you from having variety shows?

A. I have got to take permission.

*Q.* Then you can revive those variety shows, the semi-nude dances, etc., in the approved European style, if you like? There is nothing to prevent you from doing that?

A. No.

*Q.* Just as your predecessor did?

A. Yes.

*Q.* You said you deal with the Universal people. Some witnesses told us that the Universals have a sort of block system. That is not your experience?

A. Not with me. I pick and choose.

*Colonel Crawford*: Have you ever tried showing a western film with Bengali captions?

A. I have not tried it here. I should think it would be a good proposition, but unfortunately on one occasion when we intended trying it, we could

not do so. When the captions were ready and everything else was ready,—it had not been censored, the captions had to be censored again.

**Q.** You would have to submit it again to censorship, and that meant that you would have to pay an additional Rs. 5 per 1,000 feet?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** That is a definite difficulty?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Then what would you suggest?

**A.** Since it is only the translations of the titles already existing,—when the film has been passed, I do not see why the translations of the titles should again be submitted for censorship.

**Q.** Otherwise people might go off the rails. Would you suggest that the fee should only be nominal?

**A.** It should only be a nominal one. As it is a reel of 7,000 or 8,000 feet, if you are going to transform the titling of them, that will mean the titling will come to 3,000 or 4,000 feet.

**Q.** The caption is about half?

**A.** Not exactly half. It all depends upon the way in which you translate them. If the translation is wordy you have got to pay for it.

**Q.** Even if it is 4,000 feet it won't be more than Rs. 20?

**A.** Yes. I am not talking of one single film, but if you tried to do that with every film, the cumulative effect of it comes to quite a large figure.

**Q.** But you are inclined to think that Bengali caption to a western picture would help you a lot?

**A.** Yes. I endeavoured to do that in Burma.

**Q.** I was interested in the question where you objected to the censorship of a film on account of the fact that it showed revolutionary mobs. You have a good deal of knowledge of Calcutta?

**A.** I have not been in Calcutta very long.

**Q.** There is sometimes communal rioting here?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Would you consider it advisable to show films with mob rioting, in which a mob had armed itself with various domestic weapons? Do you think it would be sound on the whole, in a place where we do unfortunately have communal rioting, to give any chance of suggestion to the mob how they could arm themselves?

**A.** I do not think that would happen. If they were to do it, they would probably know it already.

**Q.** There is a certain amount of truth in that. I know they use stones.

**Mr. Neogy:** I may tell you it was being shown in the Punjab where the risk is no less than here.

**Chairman:** When they see the ruin, the damage that is caused, don't you think that that would appeal to the sensible portion of the masses very much?

**A.** Certainly.

**Mr. Green:** There is only one question that I wish to ask you about customs. In answer to question No. 9 you say: "The excessive customs duty, and the fantastic royalties demanded by foreign exporters and producers, are to a great extent responsible for this state of affairs," those being the factors that increase the cost of films. The duty, as you are no doubt aware, works out at Rs. 37-8-0 per 1,000 feet. What are the royalties?

**A.** They vary. They demand as much as 5,000 to 10,000 rupees royalty for a picture.

**Q.** For ordinary feature films?

A. No, but for a really good subject, really "super" in the full sense of the word.

Q. Do you consider then that a duty of Rs. 37-8-0 is very high compared to the royalty demanded?

A. Comparatively speaking it is not. I have been under the impression that an *ad valorem* duty would be charged on the actual cost and not on the royalty.

Q. That is not so. You suggest in answer to question No. 13, that the tariff should be charged *ad valorem*. I have considerable experience of Indian customs and I may say that if the duty is *ad valorem* the customs officers have to ascertain the real value of that film whatever it cost. That will include obviously all the royalties that the owner is going to get from it.

A. In that case I have been labouring under a delusion. There is another point to consider in this regard. The price to pay to the exporter in Europe or America for second-hand films averages £2 or £1-a reel and in addition to that we have to pay double the amount in duty.

Q. That is very old and poor stuff?

A. No. The idea is this. Each film when it is let out is let out only for a certain period and the royalty only covers that period.....

Q. If it was a good film it would have been worked to death. £2 or £3 is not even the cost of printing.

A. When films are produced, not one or two copies are made. Hundreds and hundreds of copies are made.

Q. I put it to you that it can only be a film that is useless or that has missed its market?

A. I do not agree with you there. Films are shown in 40, 50 or 60 theatres simultaneously.

Q. My point is this: if these films which you get at extraordinarily cheap rates, were any good, why on earth would the foreign exporter allow you to earn all the profit instead of earning it himself?

A. I could not answer you there, but we are offered these films.

Q. You would like to reduce the duty on those?

A. Yes.

### **Written Statement of Madan Theatres, Ltd., Calcutta, dated the 17th December 1927.**

1. Yes, we have first hand knowledge of the Film Industry in India as Importers, Exhibitors and Producers. The Organisation of M. T. Ltd., is conducted by the Joint Stock Company registered in the year 1919. Prior to the formation of this Company, the present Managing Agents had considerable experience of the running of theatres and Cinemas since about 1902. We own and control 65 Theatres in India, Burma and Ceylon. We also work in Association with 20 Theatres who take their supply regularly from us. We have no written agreement with the Proprietors of the Theatres binding them to take their supply exclusively from us except in two or three cases, when the exhibitors themselves have asked for written agreements.

2. (a) Indians of the educated classes frequent Cinemas in larger numbers than Indians of the illiterate classes. The attendance of both classes is slightly on the increase. This refers practically to all centres.

(b) Cinemas situated in the vicinity of European quarters have a larger proportion of Europeans and Anglo-Indians than Indians, while those in Indian quarters are patronised only by the Indians.

(c) The proportion of children and adolescents of impressionable ages represents about 15 per cent. of the audience.

3. With Indian audiences the classes of films that are most popular are Indian subjects produced in India, Serials and Wild West Dramas with plenty of action. Speaking of India in general big spectacular films are liked best.

4. Yes, the Exhibitors are catering adequately for educated Indian audiences. As for the Indian masses they can only follow serials, Wild West Dramas with plenty of action and Indian Dramas, but the output of Indian pictures is not adequate and the quality is inferior.

5. Good Indian films depicting Indian life are not readily available because of the paucity of output.

5. (a) They are not always of good quality. Long before the Cinematograph Committee was even contemplated arrangements were being made by us for the erection of an up-to-date Studio in India to be constructed on modern lines. Lighting equipment has already been brought out from Hollywood. Negotiations are already in progress for electric generating sets and within the course of a year we hope to have a Studio in operation.

(b) They are popular with Indians only but do not appeal to Europeans.

(c) It is more profitable to exhibit to a purely Indian audience an Indian picture than a foreign picture but European audiences and educated Indians have a preference for foreign films because of the poor quality of the indigenous product. The following is the list of some of the Indian Dramas, Ramayan, Vishnu Avatar, Pati Bhakti, Jaidev, Krishna Kanta's Will, Shiva Ratri, Turki Hoor, Leila Majnu, Nur Jehan, Nala Damayanti, Dhruva Charitra, Patni Pratap, Lanka Dahan, Krishna Janma, Gul Bakavali and Shirin Farad.

6. (a) Yes.

(b) (1), (2) Indian historical, social and mythological subjects have an appeal with all classes of Indian audiences.

7. British troops are being adequately catered for. They prefer pictures with plenty of action, comedies and spectacular films. Conditions vary as regards Indian troops, who prefer Indian subjects, Serials and Wild West Dramas with plenty of action.

8. (a) There is yet room for improvement.

(b) *Production.* Government and Public Departments should co-operate with Indian Producers and give every facility for staging scenes in which Railway trains, aeroplanes, steamers, soldiers, Zoo, Public Gardens, Public Buildings, etc., are required. Please also refer to our answer No. 5 (a).

#### DISTRIBUTION.

There are several film renting houses in the important centres of India which supply the needs of all the exhibitors. There are two purely American-owned film distributing concerns in India who have their own exchanges in various centres. The position of these two foreign renting houses is quite different from the other distributors. The matter of selection of films does not rest with them, for they have to exploit whatever films which may be produced by their principals in America, no matter if they are good, bad or indifferent. Although we are exhibitors, we also supply films to any showman who may require the same. In addition to our supplying films to various exhibitors from time to time we supply regular programmes to about 20 other exhibitors—even in places where we have our own shows. Most of these exhibitors in association have been satisfied with our product, which is proved by the fact that they have been associated with us for a number of years. The reasonable inference is that the system of business pursued by us is not working as a monopoly. In fact, these exhibitors are not controlled by any terms whatsoever. They are at liberty to try the merits of our pictures for a certain period and decide for themselves whether they will continue their dealings with us. There are two or three instances where there have been written agreements at the express request of showmen themselves. This effectively disposes of the accusation of monopoly which is entirely unfounded and is apparently prompted by trade jealousy.

## EXHIBITION.

The method of exhibition in this country can yet be improved. We have already taken up the question and have been introducing the latest method in the art. Sound effects and other mechanical contrivances for vivid realisation have lately been imported from abroad and introduced with big super films. We have in contemplation the installation of latest innovations in music, as, for example, the Furlitzer Theatre Organ which is already a great success wherever it has been introduced and is the most marvellous musical instrument to be installed in theatres. When finally installed it will cost over Rs. 65,000 and will be operated by experts specially brought out from abroad. We are fully conscious of our duties in this respect and the steps taken by us will be sufficient to convince anyone that we are not lacking in initiative and enterprise. We are in continuous touch with latest Western developments and our representatives are visiting from time to time the well-known Centres abroad so as to improve the standard of exhibition on this side. Our intention is to raise the standard of exhibition in every possible way and we hope to reach the standard of efficiency of Western Countries in a short time. While on this subject of the present condition of the Industry in this country we should like to take this opportunity to raise the questions of film piracy. The Exhibitors who have obtained exclusive rights of film exhibition on paying very heavy royalties have not often found themselves involved in considerable financial loss by reason of the fact of importation by unauthorised people of pirated or stolen copies. It is desirable that strong measures should be adopted by suitable legislative enactment to stamp out this nefarious practice which is causing great harm to the film industry in this country. If no protection is afforded, the exhibitors will be deterred from bringing out first rate productions at heavy costs.

9. No difficulty is experienced whatsoever by exhibitors in obtaining good films at reasonable prices. So far as the supply of films in India is concerned, there is no monopoly in this country. In Europe and America, where films are produced there are so many producing organisations that no questions of monopoly can possibly arise. Films are produced on such an extensive scale that no single concern in the world can control them. In this country also there is no single controlling Agency for the supply of films. Any Cinema or Theatrical concern, however small it may be, can obtain a supply without the least difficulty. The whole world market is open to it and there is no compelling force. It can never be urged by any concern in India that difficulties have been experienced by it in obtaining good films. We have secured a fairly large number of good films every year but this does not exhaust the world supply of good films and if other Exhibitors are sufficiently enterprising they can always secure any number of good films even after our purchase. As a general case, wherever we have a Cinema or Cinemas there are other Exhibitors having Cinemas the numbers of which vary from 1 to 13. There are about two small Hill Stations where besides our shows there are no other Exhibitors; that is due to the fact that the Stations are small and other Exhibitors do not think it worthwhile to open a show there.

As regards Poona we have two Theatres in Cantonment and two in the City. Besides these Theatres, there are two other Exhibitors in Poona City. We have also two theatres in Kirkee. It is suggested that no other Exhibitor can open a show in the Cantonment Area owing to the restrictions placed by the Cantonment Authorities. This is entirely a matter for their consideration with which we have no concern. We should like to explain that neither at Poona nor at Kirkee did we start the Cinemas of our own accord. The Lessees of the respective theatres approached us and requested us to take them over. We took over the management in the case of the West End Theatre only about three years ago and in the case of the other theatres only a year ago. It has been stated previously that there are over 360 Cinemas in India, Burma and Ceylon. Of these 65 are owned by Madan Theatres, Ltd., and 20 are run in Association with Madan Theatres Ltd. In places where we have got 65 Theatres, there are 87 other Exhibitors besides ourself.

ves. This clearly shows that there exists no Monopoly of any sort whatsoever. The actual facts therefore go to prove conclusively that the talk of monopoly is entirely baseless. Irresponsible charges of this description have been levelled against us at times but a glance at the state of affairs existing at different periods will at once refute such statements. We have been pioneers in the field of Film Industry in India since 1902. Our experience and business management started under the very able guidance of the late Mr. J. F. Madan, C.B.E., who had practically devoted his life in the establishment and development of Theatrical and Cinema Organisation, has enabled us to occupy a premier position in this country. Started from a small beginning, we have expanded as a result of our successful business capacity. It is grossly unfair to level the charge of Monopoly against us, but a dispassionate and unprejudiced consideration of the position in India, will, we venture to think, give the lie to such allegations. It is indeed very discouraging to note that for promoting a new industry in this country, flimsy and malicious charges are thrown against us chiefly by interested parties. Even if an Organisation like ours climbs the ladder of success by its own enterprise and business acumen and attains a certain degree of supremacy in the Cinema Market, it does not follow that it will always hold the same position unless the standard demanded by the public is kept up. New Theatres are opening out every now and then in various centres and all signs point to great changes taking place in the near future. The Cinema Industry is still in its infancy in India and pictures will always be asked for by the public whoever may show them. It must always be remembered that we are a business concern in the same way as any other big business concern having several branches. It has been brought to our notice that several contradictory statements have been made by witnesses before the Committee on the question of Monopoly. It is reported, for example, that the Agent of the Universal Pictures Corporation, a purely American-owned concern, stated in Bombay during his evidence that we are a monopoly concern while it is strange to say that the Sub-Agent of the same concern stated in his oral evidence before the Committee in Calcutta the other day that such a monopoly does not exist at all. It would thus appear that there is any amount of loose talk about this matter. We also fail to see how the Universal Pictures Corporation could accuse us of having a Monopoly when they themselves have supplied a number of pictures to us from time to time in addition to about 83 other Theatres they supply to. The system of Block and Blind Booking exists abroad and also in India. In order to secure a really good Super film the Producers demand of the exhibitors to buy a number of inferior films thereby compelling the latter to show to the public pictures of a poor quality. Block Booking restricts the Exhibitor from securing the product of other Producers as he has no room for it.

The question of booking a number of films should rest with the Exhibitor alone.

There are times when the Suppliers compel the Exhibitor to buy a certain number of pictures long before the Exhibitor has any chance to judge the merits of the pictures and this mode of operation is termed "Blind Booking". There is no objection to an Exhibitor buying a number of pictures selected by him if he is aware of the quality of the purchase. Reports from Agents abroad and the journals have been of help to the Exhibitor in the selection of his purchase. In such cases the Exhibitor is benefited as he is able to buy a certain number of pictures of proven merit to keep his theatre going.

The system of First-run or Key Theatres exists in America where it plays an important part in the sale of pictures but under the present conditions such a system does not exist in this country. There are important theatres which may be termed as first-run houses only in the sense that the really first class productions are first shown in such houses. The only advantage of first-run houses in India is that a picture is shown in a good location which has a large seating capacity and in a well appointed place where entertainment can be accompanied by elaborate musical programmes and

other attractive arrangements. It differs from the American first run houses as the exhibition of such pictures has no bearing in enhancing their market value. These Theatres as a rule exhibit a feature film continuously for one week.

11. Yes, the Exhibitors have sufficient facilities for pre-viewing films in this country; but as regards importation from abroad the Exhibitors can only judge from the reports in the various Trade Journals, from the names of the Stars and Directors with the Box Office value and from the reports of the Agents abroad. Representatives of our Firm go abroad from time to time and they also make selections on the spot.

#### AMUSEMENT TAX.

12. The severity of the tax is felt most by people with families, also those who are on the bread-line.

Business would increase considerably were the imposition of this tax to be removed.

The small amount of revenue received from Cinemas would scarcely be worthwhile to collect, as it only means throttling a struggling Industry. An Industry like ours which is in its infancy should not be taxed beyond its strength or in such a manner as to restrict its growth and development. The Cinema should not be considered a luxury, as it is a recognised fact that it is an excellent medium of education through entertainment.

The operation of this tax should be restricted chiefly to the Race Course and to betting transactions relative thereto. It should not be levied on an Industry which is striving to develop and improve itself.

After four years we were able to pay a dividend of only 2½ per cent. to our shareholders.

As the Government of India is anxious to help this infant Industry, the abolition of this tax would be a great help for the promotion thereof.

13. Owing to the Amusement-tax, heavy advertising expenses, Customs Tariff and Censorship fees, the Exhibitor is making a small profit, if any. Some relief could be given to the Exhibitor by the abolition of the Amusement Tax on Cinemas. As Europeans, Anglo-Indians and educated Indians would insist on seeing Western films, its usefulness in promoting the indigenous production of films is not apparent.

As the raw-stock of films and all materials connected with the Cinema Industry play an important part in the production of pictures, the Customs Tariff on these should be reduced to about 5 per cent. The Duty on Cinema Apparatus and Accessories should likewise be reduced.

14. Yes, the increased use of Cinemas for Educational purposes in schools and for Adult Education in Agriculture, Public Health, etc., would undoubtedly help the growth of film Industry in this country. It would be cheaper to import this class of films than to produce it locally. If Government were to take up the production of educational films and erect a costly Studio, it would mean a lot of expense, and the scheme would not be beneficial to Government, as, in addition to the initial outlay, the running expenses of a studio are to be considered. It would be more economical for Government to entrust this work to an Agency capable of producing and exploiting such films on a reasonable working basis. There is no demand for such films from a Box Office point of view, but a demand for this class of film could be created by Government and other Public Bodies. Several educational films have been imported from abroad and exhibited in our theatres. The following are a few of the Educational type of films produced by us in India:—

1. Leprosy Film for Smith Stanistreet & Co.
2. The Cry of the Children for the Bengal Public Health Department.
3. Shellac Industry.
4. Jute Industry (Jute Factories).
5. Cigarette Manufacture (Imperial Tobacco Co.).
6. Cotton (For Japan Cotton Trading Co.).

7. Tea (For Co-operative Stores and Society, Ltd., Ooty.).
8. Amarnath Pilgrimage.
9. Picturesque Kashmir.

We have also produced a few hundred topical subjects of local interest. We recently contributed to the Medical profession a film taken by us of an unusual operation performed by a skilled Surgeon in Calcutta for the purpose of educating the medical students. Our theatres, throughout India, Burma and Ceylon have been placed free of any charges for the exhibition of educational subjects.

We have now in our circuit about 100 Bray's Educational Magazines and about 72 Urban Movie Chats. Besides this we are bringing out and exhibiting regularly Madan Theatres Review, Fox Film News, etc., which feature mainly industrial and subjects of interest. A Topical Budget, Pathe Gazette and Pathe Super Gazettes are a feature of our programmes every week.

15. Conditions in this country are favourable for film production on account of the beautiful Oriental background, cheap labour, good light, etc. What we need is proper up-to-date Lighting Equipment, Modern Studio, Co-operation of the Government and other Public Bodies to help Producers with facilities for staging scenes in which Railway Trains, Aeroplanes, Steamers, Soldiers, Zoos, Public Gardens, Public Buildings, etc. [please also refer to our answer to 5 (a).]

16. Talent will have to be imported from abroad to impart sufficient technical knowledge required for film production in order that the indigenous product may compare favourably with the imported article. Expenditure of vast sums of money would necessarily be involved in such an undertaking (Please see our answer to 5 (a) and 15).

17. Till the standard of pictures is improved in India, no capitalist would like to invest money in this venture (Please refer to our answer No. 5 (a)).

18. Yes, the Government and other Public Bodies could help the indigenous industry by giving facilities to the Producer by staging scenes in which Railway Trains, Aeroplanes, Steamers, Soldiers, Zoos, Public Gardens, Public Buildings, etc., are required. As raw stock of films and all materials connected with the Cinema Industry play an important part in the production of pictures, the Customs Tariff on these should be reduced to about 5 per cent.

19. The cost of film production in this country is much less than of other countries. But at the same time, on a qualitative comparison, the standard of film production in India is very poor.

20. (a) Yes, it does involve expenditure from Government Funds to a certain extent. Having regard to the value of Cinema as a great educational factor, the expenditure involved is quite justifiable.

(b) Such expenditure could be made by ear-marking a portion of the Revenue derived from the Customs Tariff on imported films.

21. A state agency, instead of helping the Industry, would kill private enterprise and initiative.

22. There is no reasons why we should not patronise British Empire films provided the standard and prices are competitive. Quality tempered with price in production will always determine the film market of the world. Excellence of product alone is the factor for success. Whose product? Anybody's, any country's, produce so long as it is the best and at the right price.

22. (a) Such participation would assist the Indian Film Industry provided a higher standard of product is established.

(b) Exchange of films between Indian and other parts of the Empire would certainly make India better known and understood throughout the Empire but the present standard of Indian films is so poor that the other countries will not accept them. There are indications however of future improvement.

(c) Such participation, however, would not improve the standard of Western films in India.



23. (a) To a certain extent, by reciprocity or interchange of locally produced films under the auspices of the Governments of the different countries.

24. (a), (b) No.

(c) Scenes depicting debauchery, obscenity, Triumph of Vice, Over virtue, those which bring into contempt public characters acting as such, *e.g.* Soldiers wearing His Majesty's Uniform, etc., irreverent treatment of sacred subjects, men and women in bed together, situation accentuating delicate marital relations. "First Night Scenes". Confinements, subjects dealing with the premeditated seduction of girls, scenes laid in brothels, Prostitution and Procuration, scenes depicting the effect of venereal diseases, inherited or acquired, Illicit sexual relationships, scenes holding up the King's uniform to contempt ridicule, subjects suggesting disloyalty of Native States, etc., etc.

It is harmful to people of impressionable minds.

(d) (1) Censorship is adequate for sex films.

(d) (2) It is also adequate for crime films.

(e) This does not arise.

25. Although the Social Customs and outlook between the West and the East may be different, it does not necessitate special consideration in the Censorship of films in this country.

26. (a) Sufficient care has already been taken in censoring films likely to offend religious susceptibilities.

(b) There were two instances where pictures had to be taken off the screen owing to the objection of a certain class of audience. The films in question were *The Moon of Israel*, and *The Life of Lord Buddha*. In the case of the former it was shown for three solid years in India, Burma and Ceylon and no specific complaint was made except in Delhi, where vague objection were raised. However not to offend anybody the picture was withdrawn.

As regards the latter picture, namely, *Life of Lord Buddha*, the objection to this at Rangoon was that a certain class of the audience did not like the idea of the Buddha being represented by a mortal man. This picture was also withdrawn. Wherever possible, we do not advocate the making of pictures liable to hurt the religious susceptibilities of any faith.

27. (a) The films exhibited in India have no tendency to misrepresent Western Civilization or to lower it in the eyes of Indians. It is not a fact that films representing Western Life are generally unintelligible to an uneducated Indian or are misunderstood by him. The average Indian comes chiefly to see Indian subjects, Serials and Action-Dramas, Western Social Dramas have very little appeal for him. To our knowledge no undesirable result follows from the exhibition of such pictures.

(b) To the best of our knowledge, no films have been exhibited abroad which have a tendency to misrepresent Indian civilisation.

28. (a) To the best of our knowledge no bad effect on children has resulted from pictures. As a rule parents exercise due precaution by not sending their children to pictures which in their opinion are unsuitable.

Where special performances for children are given, the Exhibitor takes the necessary precaution to select suitable productions.

(b) No class of film shown in this country has a bad effect on adolescents, because any part that may be considered objectionable in the true sense of the term has already been taken out, as far as can be anticipated in the preview.

29. We are not in favour of certification of certain films as for adults only. When exhibited for entertainment, however, we reserve the right for recommending certain education subjects of a medical nature which would be shown to adults only, but under the proper auspices.

30. We do not believe it is necessary to place an age-limit as regards children attending Cinemas. Children of a tender age, are protected by their parents, and in our experience this has never made it necessary for the management to interfere.

31. Some form of Censorship must always be exercised in order to prevent its misuse.

32. The present system of Censorship in our Province has proved satisfactory so far. For improvement we suggest that a Board of appeal be established to consist of in personnel representatives from the Boards and to act only on cases of appeal.

(a) We consider that a strict form of Censorship has been exercised by the present Boards and by the Boards since their inception. We see no reason for increasing their powers making Censorship stricter.

(b) If Censorship be carried any further we believe it would result in a falling-off in the attendance at Cinemas.

(c) When Censorship interferes with the artistic and inspirational development of either the author of the story or the Director of the picture, many times the continuity is destroyed and the scenes that remain are very liable to be misinterpreted.

34. We do not advocate the replacement of the present Provincial Board of Censors by a single Central Board, but if one were established, it should be along the following lines:—

#### FILM CENSORSHIP BOARD.

In justice and fairness to all Film Importers, we consider two Boards of Film Censors with all-Indian powers may be located one in Bombay and another in Calcutta, these being two of the largest Ports of importance which import Cinema films.

But if the Government of India are not in favour of creating two Boards of Censors, one Central Board with plenary powers applicable to the entire territory of India, Burma and Ceylon must be located in Calcutta in preference to Bombay or any other centre for the following reasons:—

1. Calcutta is the largest port in India importing the greatest number of films.
2. Calcutta is our Head Office and Film Distributing Centre for nearly 100 Theatres in India, Burma and Ceylon.
3. We import largest number of films annually, Madan Theatres Ltd. Calcutta has prior right to have the Central Board inasmuch as M. T. Ltd., Globe and Alliance import greater number of films than that of all the Bombay Importers put together.

#### *Comparative Statement of Films censored in Bombay and Calcutta during the years 1925-27.*

The total number of films censored by four important Firms of Calcutta and Bombay between 1925 and 1927 as gathered from Official Records, is as follows:—

	Reels.
Madan Theatres Ltd., Calcutta . . . . .	5,029
Globe Theatre, Calcutta . . . . .	1,063
Alliance, Calcutta . . . . .	691
<b>TOTAL</b> . . . . .	<b>7,383</b>
Universal, Bombay . . . . .	4,340
Pathé, Bombay . . . . .	1,871
<b>TOTAL</b> . . . . .	<b>6,211</b>

It will be seen from the above that the total number of films, in Calcutta, censored is greater than that of Bombay by more than 1,000 reels.

It therefore stands to reason that Calcutta should have prior right to the location of Central Board.

If the Central Board were located in Bombay, Calcutta being the chief importing centre, all films after they are cleared and Duty and Freight paid thereon, will have to be sent to Bombay for censoring purposes and thereafter transhipped back to Calcutta for distribution to the Branch Cinemas. This extra Railway freight will be a heavy charge on the Company's resources. Besides it would necessitate a second film establishment in Bombay with all the expenditure attached to it which is a further liability on the Company.

Our Film Storage rooms are in Calcutta and if Bombay were to have the Central Board we have to maintain two separate Film Storages, which is not only unpractical from a business point of view but a heavy burden to us.

The expenses of such Board can be met from the Censorship fees.

35. (a) The present constitution of the Provincial Boards is satisfactory.

(b) We consider it unnecessary to have a whole-time experienced well-paid Officer as Censor at each centre, to be assisted by an Advisory Board of non-officials.

36. (a) The present system prevailing at Bombay and Calcutta, under which films are ordinarily examined by Inspectors subordinate to the Board, has so far been satisfactory. A man of education, broad-minded and familiar with local conditions and who is strictly non-partisan will make an ideal Censor.

(b) We do not think it necessary that all films should be examined by members of the Board. However if outside opinion is desired we do not believe it would be difficult to secure gentlemen of suitable standing to offer their services without remuneration.

37. (a) There are adequate safeguards under the Act for preventing the exhibition of a film which may be objectionable locally although it has been passed by a Board in some other part of India.

(b) Any more safeguards are not needed.

38. There are instances of films which have been passed by one Board of Censors in one Province and found objectionable by another Board in another Province. The following films are banned by the Bengal Board but passed by the Bombay Board:—1. *Once the Enchantress*. 2. *Orphans of the Storm*. 3. *White Rose*. 4. *Triumph of the Rat*. As for the film "*After Six Days*" this was banned by the Bombay Board but passed by the Bengal Board of Censors.

39. We have not come across any instances of pictures disapproved or banned from exhibition in the country of origin or in Great Britain being exhibited in India.

40. There is absolutely no necessity at all of censoring Posters, Handbills and advertisements of Cinema performances. We have not noticed any such advertisements which were of an objectionable nature.

41. There has been a decided improvement in the moral standard of films exhibited in India in recent years.

42. There should be co-operation between the Board of Censors and the trade and we suggest that a representative appointed by the trade should be on the Board to represent the case of the exhibitor. When the Board of Censors meets to consider the Inspector's report, the other side of the case is not given a hearing, but with the trade's representative on the Board, the trade will have the hearing it so badly needs. This procedure will result in the trade and the Board being brought closer together.

43. (a), (b), (c) We do not think there is any necessity for a stricter control over the import and export of films. To the best of our knowledge there has not been import and export of any obscene films. Under the present conditions it would be difficult for the Customs authorities to detect any such films without the necessary staff and equipment. This would mean very heavy unnecessary expenditure and could not be put to practice without

inconveniencing the trade to a very great extent. The present censorship arrangement is adequate enough.

44. Public bodies and the Press could assist in maintaining a good standard of films by attending shows and offering constructive criticism.

45. (a) There is no necessity for Government to exercise control over film-production.

(b) Film Producing Agencies, in our opinion, should not be registered and licensed, nor their Studio periodically inspected, as the Industry is still in its infancy.

### Oral Evidence of Mr. J. J. MADAN, Managing Director, Madan Theatres, Limited, on Monday, the 19th December 1927.

*Chairman:* Before I go on to examine Mr. Madan, I want to inform the members of the Committee that any questions relating to the financial position of his Company or any questions relating to particulars of contracts, he wants to be taken *in camera*. I therefore request members to avoid such questions for private examination, and you warn us, Mr. Madan, if you think you ought to answer any question *in camera*. Now, Mr. Madan, your family is interested in the amusement trade of this country?

A. Yes.

Q. And you have been in it from 1902?

A. Quite right.

Q. You are interested both in the stage and in the cinema?

A. Right.

Q. You run theatres for dramas and also theatres for cinema shows?

A. Quite right.

Q. And Madan Theatres, Limited, include both classes of business?

A. Yes.

Q. You have converted the whole of the business into a joint-stock concern.

A. Yes.

Q. And of the 85 theatres I think you have mentioned.....

A. 65 are owned and controlled by us and 20 are in association.

Q. Of the 65 theatres you own the buildings?

A. Some are freehold and some are leasehold.

Q. That you have taken on some lease from the owners?

A. Quite right. You will find that in our balance sheet for 1926.

Q. No, I don't think I have it.

A. Well I give you a copy. Here is a list that will give you an idea of what freehold buildings we hold and the buildings under lease and so on.

Q. This is your last balance sheet?

A. Yes.

Q. I suppose your family do other business besides this?

A. Yes.

Q. Which is not part of the joint-stock concern?

A. No, it has nothing to do with it.

Q. Now you are engaged, so far as cinemas are concerned, both in exhibition, distribution and production—in all 3 branches?

A. Yes.

Q. Have you been interested in production for a long time?

A. Quite a long time. In fact here are some testimonials,—I think I have given you copies of them,—just to give you an idea as to when we started producing.

**Q.** You have given us a copy in your statement. Of course your reputation is so well established I do not think you need any testimonials.

**A.** I give you that just to show when we started production.

**Q.** Now is there any other person in India, whether European or Indian, who has taken as much interest in the amusement section as you have done or very nearly that?

**A.** It is not for me to say that.

**Q.** But is there any concern which has the volume of business, or half the volume of business, that you have?

**A.** Well it is not apparent.

**Q.** That is my impression too. Now I suppose you have brought your experience to bear upon the growth of the industry in this matter?

**A.** We are doing our best.

**Q.** And how long have you yourself been personally interested in this business?

**A.** Since 1913.

**Q.** You have travelled abroad in connection with this industry?

**A.** Yes. My brother has travelled and then I took up after him and another brother of mine will be leaving in the course of next year. We are continuously in touch with everything going on on the other side.

**Q.** Have you your own agents in all the important centres?

**A.** Yes, in all the important centres—Paris, London, Berlin and New York—wherever we think it is necessary.

**Q.** Wherever you can get information you get your agents to help in your business?

**A.** Quite so.

**Q.** Now do you think the cinema habit is growing among the people of this country?

**A.** It is, undoubtedly; by the introduction of new theatres in different parts of the country, the taste is being created to a certain extent.

**Q.** But what do you think? Can you give us the figures as to the yearly attendance at the cinemas. Have you collected at all for your own business the figures as to the number of people who attend?

**A.** It is difficult to give you an answer right off; I can give you the details but it will take time.

**Q.** I don't think we can get it from any other source, but perhaps for the sake of your business you may have collected such figures?

**A.** It will take a lot of time to get them together.

**Q.** What I should like to have is the figure for cinema-goers for the last 3 years to show whether there has been any growth in the attendance.

**A.** There has been a slight increase because we have opened out new centres, new theatres in different parts of India, which have brought us new customers.

**Q.** I suppose you can tell us from your box office receipts whether the attendance is growing at the cinemas?

**A.** In centres like Calcutta and Bombay there is very slight variation but, of course, the increase is due to the opening out of new cinemas in other centres.

**Q.** So any increase in attendance is not due so much to more people in the cities going to the cinemas as to more cinemas being opened?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** And how many new cinema have been opened, say, in the last 3 years?

**A.** Quite a number and more even right now. There is a new theatre in the course of construction in Calcutta in Dharamtola Street.

**Q.** You know there are at least 100 cities in India with a population of more than 50,000.

A. But there are signs of new cinemas opening out in various centres. We are getting requests from various small stations for films and other things and we notice there are new theatres springing up everywhere.

Q. There are 350 theatres.

A. Over 350. As far as I can get it I think there are as many as 375.

Q. How many of them run continuously? Yesterday we were told by a gentleman that only 200 are really working theatres. The others only have shows now and then.

A. Oh no. It is only in hill stations, where owing to the severity of the cold season, they cannot keep the theatres open all the year round. At the hill stations there is just the season for 4 or 5 months.

Q. Out of the 350, how many are working continuously do you think?

A. Practically all of them with the exception of those at hill stations.

Q. In the cities I suppose they are running daily?

A. Yes, all of them.

Q. Sometimes twice daily.

A. Yes, always twice daily.

Q. But in the theatres in the remote parts and districts they all run daily also?

A. They run daily.

Q. Wherever there is a cinema it runs daily?

A. Practically.

Q. You don't agree with that gentleman who said that over 100 are used only occasionally.

A. Not at all.

Q. But how can we satisfy ourselves? Your experience is one way and the other gentleman's experience is another way.

A. Well that is my experience at least.

Q. Now I suppose when you compare the cinema-going habit in other civilised countries with the habit in our country, I suppose here very few people go to the cinema. For instance, percentage by population. Out of 100 people, how many people go to the cinema in our country as compared with people in other civilised countries?

A. It is a very small percentage if you take the population.

Q. That is what I mean, the percentage is very small compared with other countries.

A. Quite so.

Q. I suppose America has the largest percentage.

A. Absolutely.

Q. Almost everyone goes to the cinema there.

A. Practically.

Q. And how does our percentage compare with a poor country like Belgium or a small country like Norway or Sweden?

A. I have no experience of Belgium or Norway.

Q. Or of any Eastern country, say a country like Egypt. How does the cinema-going habit there compare?

A. I have not been in Egypt.

Q. Can you tell us whether the cinema-going habit is more established there.

A. Reading the trade journals there is no sign to show that there has been an increase.

Q. You think there is plenty of scope for the development of the trade side and the industry side of the cinema?

A. Ample scope. We have just scratched the surface. There are great possibilities for the cinema in India.

**Q.** You think that both on the exhibition side and on the production side it is in an infant condition?

**A.** Absolutely.

**Q.** And one has to be careful in dealing with such an industry? You cannot be rash in making regulations about it. You think the laws of supply and demand have established themselves sufficiently and that one can not safely come forward with any proposal for either restricting or expanding the industry?

**A.** There is no question of restriction because the supply and demand are there and nobody can control them.

**Q.** I mean, for instance, it is urged upon us by several people that the cinema is productive of evil in some respects and therefore calls for stricter censorship.

**A.** I think the censorship is quite strict enough.

**Q.** I see, but I want your advice in the matter whether it will interfere with the growth of the trade if we go in for any undue deviation from the existing practice.

**A.** There is no question about that. Naturally our receipts would diminish, and nobody would care to go to the cinema.

**Q.** Having regard to the infant condition of the trade and the industry, as a man of experience, do you think a stricter censorship will involve the trade and industry in any trouble?

**A.** Absolutely.

**Q.** Or rather, suppose we want to prohibit the import of foreign films in order to encourage the growth of the Indian industry?

**A.** The way to encourage the Indian industry is not by just prohibiting the import of foreign films but by improving our industry ourselves here. It is only by improving the standard of our films that we can go ahead.

**Q.** I suppose you know it is one of the recognised methods of promoting any industry to make it equal to foreign competitors.

**A.** But there are a certain class of people here that insist on seeing foreign pictures and we have got to give to the public what the public wants. You take the European, the Anglo-Indian, and the educated Indian—they all want to see foreign pictures.

**Q.** I am only asking you that as a man of experience for my own guidance in this matter. Supposing I really were inclined to impose difficulties in the way of foreign films coming in here, you would ask me to pause and hesitate before I do that?

**A.** I would surely. We have got to cultivate the taste of the people here, and if we restrict foreign pictures, we are giving the public junk not worth exhibiting, and that I would not dare to put before my European public.

**Mr. Green:** I take it you are speaking both as a producer and an exhibitor?

**A.** And an importer.

**Chairman:** Of course your interests are conflicting.

**A.** Still, it is for the good of the trade that I say that. We have got to take everything into consideration.

**Q.** One has to be careful in interfering. Now can you tell me roughly how many years a picture runs in our country?

**A.** It all depends upon the wear and tear.

**Q.** I don't mean the same copy but I mean the picture itself.

**A.** It depends upon the box office value of the picture concerned. Take "The Thief of Baghdad" for instance. It is a picture which you can run now and again.

**Q.** It has been done already?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** So that the figures of import for any particular year is no guidance as to the pictures actually in circulation. We have 3 million feet of film this year, last year we imported 2½ million feet, and the previous year 2 million feet. Can we take it that all the 7½ million feet are now in circulation safely?

**A.** I would not say all the films are in circulation. There are some on hand also. An exhibitor has to keep a supply for six months or so on hand.

**Q.** Is it not the habit of the cinema exhibitor to show one film say for a few months here and then send it to Rangoon?

**A.** Yes, it is kept in circulation.

**Q.** And then send it to Madras; and then bring it back to Calcutta.

**A.** Only in the case of a picture which has a distinct box office value.

**Q.** Of what percentage of pictures can you say that?

**A.** A very small percentage, pictures of the type of "The Thief of Baghdad".

**Q.** Take a city like Calcutta; its taste must be very high; so you dare not show here the same pictures every year.

**A.** I would not say that. In the case of pictures like "The Thief of Baghdad", and films featuring Charlie Chaplin and Harold Lloyd,—they are universally well known.

**Q.** I want to know whether that is only an exceptional case.

**A.** After a certain period a picture which has any box value is not shelved; it goes on the circuit till the copy is absolutely destroyed.

**Q.** I quite understand that as a general principle. If a picture has no value you won't exhibit it. But what percentage of pictures has this box office value for re-circulation.

**A.** With the exception of pictures like "The Thief of Baghdad" there are very few productions. There are many good productions but there are very few really distinguished ones.

**Q.** Can you tell me exactly how many thousand feet are really now in circulation in India?

**A.** The best thing is to look up the import list. Exhibitors do carry a certain stock; we always take that precaution and there are naturally certain pictures on the shelf. It is difficult to come to any conclusion.

**Q.** Difficult to say how much is actually in circulation?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** All the pictures imported may not be in circulation. Pictures imported last year or the previous year may not have come into circulation?

**A.** It is possible but it is very seldom that an exhibitor keeps a picture for 2 years on the shelf; it would not be business-like to do so.

**Q.** No. Now is it a fact that in remote parts of the country only pictures which have become very old— I mean it takes a long time to reach the remote parts between the introduction of a picture in the country of its origin and these parts?

**A.** The small stations come in after the big cities, there is no question about that, but it is not very late.

**Q.** Take a concrete example like "Ben Hur" which is a famous picture. It was released early in 1926 in America and Europe.

**A.** Quite right.

**Q.** It was the second best picture for 1926, from what I have seen in the Trade Journal.

**A.** Quite right.

**Q.** And it was in January 1926 given a trade show in London and exhibited immediately afterwards.

**A.** Quite.

**Q.** Now when did it come to India?



A. We showed it here just about a couple of months ago.

Q. That is more than 18 months later.

A. We are not really late because "Ben Hur" was not shown in the other centres of England. It was only exhibited in London and has gone to the provincial centres.

Q. Yes, but I mean, here is the most popular film in Europe and it does not reach India till 18 months after its release!

A. But in our case we are quite up to date as far as we are concerned.

Q. I don't mean to blame you.

A. I want to explain that we are not very far behind the exhibitors on the other side.

Q. I was rather surprised at a statement made by another gentleman that almost contemporaneously you are getting pictures here and in going into the history of "Ben Hur" this is what I found.

A. Well, take another picture "Gauchon," featuring Douglas Fairbanks. It was only recently released and we have received a copy here. So we are not so far behind.

Q. I do not want to blame you at all. I only want to know the facts. Please don't think I am criticising you.

A. Well, I am myself only just explaining the situation.

Q. You see that bears very much on the other question about block and blind booking; when a big picture like "Ben Hur" is not available for 18 months. I want to know whether in India there is really anything like blind or block booking.

A. There is a system of blind or block booking as I have explained in my written statement. By the way, I find that "Ben Hur" was received in Calcutta about six months ago but it was not shown for this reason that we were late for the 'season', we had missed the 'season' and naturally we put it aside.

Q. Because you didn't want to show it in the slack season.

A. So we are not very far behind, as you can see from that.

Q. That is what I want to know. As regards foreign pictures taking first class films, how far behind are you, say, compared with England—as regards American pictures, that is to say.

A. About 6 to 7 months.

Q. Or German pictures.

A. Sometimes even in advance.

Q. Can you tell me whether "Variety" was actually shown in England.

A. It was shown.

Q. For how many months?

A. I couldn't tell you.

Q. You imported it?

A. We have.

Q. In what other countries was it exhibited?

A. It was exhibited in the United States.

Q. I suppose you went into its history before you imported it?

A. I have seen the picture both in Berlin and New York. It was shown in Berlin, in New York and in England. It was very successful in New York, breaking all previous records. They praised the standard of that picture and they called to American producers to look to this example and improve their standard.

Q. For how long did it run in England?

A. I don't know quite but I could find out from the trade journal and let you know.

**Q.** And did it receive any adverse comment in Britain in regard to its moral tone?

**A.** It has not come to my notice. Of course "cuts" have been made in every part. I wanted to show it with the cuts already made.

**Q.** I should like to have the press reviews or the British Press Reviews if you can of "Variety"? I suppose it was shown in England as "Vaudeville"?

**A.** Yes, it was shown there under that title.

**Q.** What I want to know is whether Indian production keeps pace with foreign imports?

**A.** The output is not sufficient, it is far behind. We want more Indian pictures and of a better quality. I am averse to increasing the quantity at the cost of quality, because that will create a dislike for Indian pictures.

**Q.** I was rather struck with the fact that, interested as you are in the import trade, the production of Indian pictures by your firm has not been adequate?

**A.** We are doing our bit both to increase our output and also to improve the standard of our films. We are going to erect an up-to-date studio on modern lines. We are looking ahead.

**Q.** Supposing you had more theatres in big towns for showing Indian pictures and to capture the Indian public. Do you think the Indian pictures will have a box office value?

**A.** Yes, every time, absolutely.

**Q.** Probably you are over busy in other directions?

**A.** We are looking ahead. We realise the possibilities of Indian pictures. Here is a list of Indian pictures we have produced. (The witness handed in a list to the Chairman.) We have produced about 60 pictures during the last 7 years.

**Q.** Are they all in circulation?

**A.** Practically all of them are in circulation. "Durgesh Nandini" has just been released. The Indian pictures produced generally in the country have not yet gone out of fashion.

**Q.** How many copies generally do you keep of Indian pictures?

**A.** We make quite a number of copies. It depends upon the wear and tear.

**Q.** In some places you are obliged to re-issue new copies?

**A.** Yes, every time and in every case.

**Mr. Green:** What do you start with?

**A.** We first release one print and then we print another. Then we will have the two in circulation. When a copy gets bad or when there is a public demand for it, we release another, so that Indian pictures have a value, and a standing value too. There is no fear of their getting out of fashion as long as we keep up the standard. At present they are not of a very high standard,—improvements are needed in all directions,—but there are possibilities. Every other country in the world has improved her productions. They were not so perfect at the beginning when they first started the industry. Even in England they are every day trying to improve their standard, in fact every country is taking up this question. Here in India this industry is still in its infancy, and considering the progress we have so far made, it is a record of which any country might feel proud.

**Chairman:** How is it then,—I don't mean yourself,—that good business people in Bombay have not come forward to take up the industry?

**A.** For lack of enterprise and lack of finance.

**Q.** Do you think there is lack of business enterprise and lack of finance in Bombay? Or do you think there is social stigma attached to the trade itself?

**A.** I don't see why there should be any social stigma attached to this line.

*Q.* There should not be any, I quite agree with you. But is there any aversion on the part of people to take to this trade?

*A.* I don't agree with that view at all. There is no such aversion on the part of the people to take to this line.

*Q.* I was wondering why, having regard to the potentiality, as you say, as a business proposition, of producing Indian films, more people have not taken any interest in this line?

*A.* We see great possibilities, while others have failed to see them.

*Q.* I was rather struck with the figures that you gave us?

*Mr. Green :* We have had figures showing that Bombay is very much bigger as an importing port as well as a censoring port.

*Chairman :* Every year you will find that the number of films and footage of films examined is larger in Bombay, taking the last three years. Probably there is more Indian footage in Bombay than in Bengal. Have you got the footage of Indian films examined here?

*A.* Here is an abstract of Indian Dramas produced by Indian film companies. (Abstract handed to the Chairman). This gives a list of productions for the last seven years. Except ourselves, in Bengal there are no other concerns worthy of mention who are producing films.

*Mr. Green :* Which is the Nasik one?

*A.* We have not got statistics.

*Chairman :* Now, as regards the Indian productions, there is a general complaint that you don't show films made by other producers, is that so?

*A.* That is not correct. The list I have just produced is clear evidence to the contrary. We are showing a good many Indian pictures, and we certainly need a good many.

*Q.* It is said that you allow them a smaller percentage than what other exhibitors give?

*A.* That is not so. We have allowed them from 25 to 36 per cent. of the gross, publicity being our own job, and I consider our terms very fair. I think it is very arbitrary on the part of certain producers to demand 45 per cent.

*Q.* What do they get in England?

*A.* It depends upon the quality of the pictures. As a rule they rent the pictures from renting houses, and producers are much better off in England than here on account of the distributing agencies who compete with each other.

*Q.* So far as income is concerned, the producer is better off in other countries?

*A.* Yes, on account of the multiplicity of distributing agencies. Here in India there are no distributing agencies except for foreign films.

*Q.* Do you think the Indian producer will go to a distributing agency in India?

*A.* I think the Indian producer can get round the exhibitors directly, there is no difficulty whatever. And if the exhibitors were to approach the producers through distributing agencies, they will have to pay the middleman's profit for nothing.

*Colonel Crawford :* As your cinemas increase, then the middleman may be necessary, is it not?

*A.* There is the question of block and blind booking coming in. Why should a producer go through a distributing agency if he can have direct dealings with the exhibitor?

*Q.* Why do they have it in America?

*A.* Because they have the block booking system there.

*Q.* Why is a distributor at all necessary there, why should the middleman come in at all in America?

*Chairman :* Probably, he advertises more and that method is more profitable on account of a large number of cinemas there?

A. It would not pay the exhibitor here, because there are not enough cinemas here, and the producer can get round the exhibitor directly here.

Mr. Green : Supposing the number of cinema houses multiplied enormously?

A. There are concerns who take up the films directly. Take the Paramount, all these people deal direct.

Chairman : Do you think you will suffer if you are compelled to show Indian pictures of a certain length in each one of your theatres, provided they have been approved as being fit for Universal exhibition?

A. The whole point is that the European and Anglo-Indian public will not stand an Indian picture as it is made now.

Q. I suppose from national interest you will educate them?

A. The only way to do that is to improve our standard and not to impose the quota system, because the Indian producer will take advantage of the quota and make inferior pictures.

Q. The same argument was used in England?

A. We don't come up to their standard now. Besides that, we have also to bear in mind the fact that the European and Anglo-Indian would not care to patronise an Indian film, as it is not quite up to the proper standard.

Q. He must adjust himself to the conditions of this country?

A. That is a thing for them to do, but by adopting the quota system our receipts will be affected very considerably.

Q. That will only be for a time, i.e., until you improve the standard. Do you think he will hold out for all time? And are you not prepared to face a small loss in the interests of the country?

A. Considering the present state of the industry, I think we should get all the encouragement we can possibly get from all quarters.

Q. I don't say you should compel him to see 20 or 30 per cent. of the films all at once, you will have to create in him a taste for the Indian pictures?

A. Let us first improve the standard of our pictures.

Q. Let him also improve the taste for seeing the Indian films?

A. It is more the duty of the producer to give the right stuff.

Q. Is it not up to them and to producers to adjust relations?

A. Yes, surely it is.

Q. Don't you think that, you, as an exhibitor, should welcome such a proposal in order that you may develop the Indian industry?

A. We do welcome such a proposal, but we must first of all come up to the proper standard.

Q. That is why I qualify my statement by saying that if a film is passed by a Central Board as fit for universal exhibition for all audiences. Nobody wants to compel them to see unsavoury things?

A. Quite right.

Q. Do you think that a central body attached to the Government of India would be a suitable body for advising the Indian industry, I mean for advising as to what should be done and so on?

A. We don't mind the advice, surely we need all the advice we can get.

Q. The Central Board to also act as an appellate authority to decide disputes arising between the different Provincial Boards?

A. But a body created to control the industry will not be beneficial.

Q. I mean to watch and co-ordinate and to see how the thing goes on?

A. That will be beneficial to the industry.

Q. Will the industry welcome it?

A. If they can get advice I don't see why anybody should refuse it.

**Q.** There should also be a statutory body to decide disputes arising between the Provincial Boards regarding the question of censorship?

**A.** That will be good, and I would welcome it.

**Q.** Do you resort to the block system in your bookings?

**A.** We generally select our pictures. If we are not down on the spot, we go by the reports of the Trade Journals which we get. These are a few Trade Journals which we receive (a copy of the Journal was handed to the Chairman), and I would refer you to page 58 of that Journal. We also get cables and letters telling us about the quality or the box value of certain pictures. We are also on the spot to make our own selections.

**Q.** So that you do not suffer from the evils of the Block system?

**A.** As far as we are concerned, we don't, but the poor exhibitor who is dependent on some of these foreign distributing agencies has often times to take all that they supply him with. We don't resort to the Block system of booking at all in the true sense of the word. I want a good number of pictures myself, but I look to everything.

**Q.** Could you tell us the total number of films imported by you, i.e., of the so many films imported into this country, how many are taken by Madans?

**A.** I can give them from my records.

**Q.** Could you give us figures for the last three years in footage of foreign pictures, including British, German and French, imported into this country?

**A.** I can send them to you.

**Q.** Do you import any Chinese or Japanese films?

**A.** No, they don't appeal to people here. Once a private firm approached us to rent one of our theatres in the Indian quarter to show a Chinese picture. We did not take the risk of showing it ourselves because we knew that the Chinese population was very small, and our friends who showed the film did not make any profit at all.

**Q.** Have you been to Japan?

**A.** No, but I know something about the films there from these Journals.

**Q.** I see they have gone on improving the industry to such an extent that they do not import more than 50 per cent. of the films from outside Japan?

**A.** Yes, but you see that Japan is one nation, and that accounts for it.

**Q.** I just wanted to know what they did to develop their industry so marvellously so as to reduce their imports to 50 per cent. Was there any law passed prohibiting the import of foreign films?

**A.** I don't think so.

**Q.** How is it then that here foreign films are on the average cheaper to the exhibitor than Indian films?

**A.** For this reason that the foreign producers cannot get all the value from this country. This is practically an extra market, what you may call surfeit. They get all their money in their own country.

**Q.** You don't think that there are any firms who manufacture films specially for the east?

**A.** No. Whatever comes to this country is shown there before hand.

**Q.** You don't agree in the view that there are producers in America who specially manufacture films for oriental consumption?

**A.** I don't agree there.

**Q.** I suppose the producers in America make good, bad and indifferent films. It is probably one of the inevitable consequences in a trade?

**A.** Yes, but if they show a bad picture it won't be of any box value.

**Q.** I suppose you have increased the number of theatres. Have you increased your circuit?

**A.** In 1920, the total number of theatres either run solely on our account or in association with us was 37. Besides this number, 14 theatres took films

on hire exclusively from us. This makes our circuit 51 theatres in 1920. To-day it is 85, i.e., 65 our own and 20 on association with others.

*Q.* Do you resort to unfair competition? One instance was mentioned to us that in a particular place a theatre was being run by another agency on a lease from the proprietor and then you offered a double rental in order to cut him out?

*A.* That is not true. I will give you an instance. They advertised a property in Rangoon. The Globe Cinema was paying about Rs. 1,050 for it. They had put in an advertisement in the papers calling for sealed tenders from all the exhibitors, and naturally, as we needed theatres for our supply, in the course of business we just submitted our tender.

*Q.* And your tender was accepted?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* So it was in the ordinary course of trade?

*A.* Absolutely.

*Q.* Anyway you say this is the normal development of your business?

*A.* Absolutely.

*Q.* What would be your advice if for instance in every town of an established population of 25,000 or upwards, the municipality put up a theatre for the public exhibition of cinemas and eventually for renting out to possible exhibitors?

*A.* I don't see how it will benefit them. An exhibitor is welcome to open a cinema in any centre he chooses. Your municipality may open one in a centre where it could not be run on a profitable basis.

*Q.* I don't think you grasp the point. There are several towns without any cinemas?

*A.* There are many centres where there are cinemas and where there should be more cinemas.

*Q.* Never mind. They will take care of themselves?

*A.* That is a matter for the exhibitor. If they have not got the business foresight in them I don't see how the municipality can help them.

*Q.* Keep a public hall?

*A.* But if the exhibitors have not got the business enterprise?

*Q.* I suppose you believe in travelling cinemas?

*A.* We used to have them—we have dropped them now.

*Q.* Why is that?

*A.* Well, we have just got one somewhere near Madras. Formerly when we hadn't the requisite number of theatres, then we used to have travelling shows; now that we have our theatres, we have just one travelling show.

*Q.* We are told there are several travelling cinemas here?

*A.* There are.

*Q.* Don't you think it would be encouraging the cinema habit if each town built a place which could be hired to exhibitors of travelling cinemas?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* He need not then carry a tent with him, he would be supplied with a place of exhibition?

*A.* If you have a place of exhibition, there are the running expenses attached to it. If the exhibitor cannot make it a profit-paying concern, I don't see how it can benefit him.

*Q.* Well, anyway that is not a matter in which you are interested so much. In the matter of competition as regards exhibiting films, do you think the film trade stands on any different footing from other trades. Take for instance, buying and selling of foreign soap. Do you think this should stand on a different footing?

*A.* In what way?

**Q.** I mean in the matter of interference by Government?

**A.** I don't see why it should, unless there has been an abuse.

**Q.** You don't see any difference between any other trade and this? Films should be treated in the same way except in the matter of censorship?

**A.** Absolutely. Why, there is the censorship which takes care of the film.

**Q.** In other matters you think this trade should stand on the same footing as every other trade in foreign materials?

**A.** If there is any interference it might kill private enterprise and initiative.

**Q.** But so long as the trade does not ask for any Government help or assistance, you think it should be left to itself?

**A.** Surely.

**Q.** Except where it concerns the public, for the purpose of checking abuses?

**A.** Absolutely, if any abuse has been made . . . .

**Q.** Now, as regards production facilities which you mentioned in your statement. Do you think it should be promiscuously given or only to Indian registered firms?

**A.** It should be 100 per cent. Indian capital.

**Q.** And management also Indian?

**A.** Yes, that would give an impetus to the industry.

**Q.** But don't you think it would be better, having regard to the lack of expert talent in our country?

**A.** The talent could be imported.

**Mr. Green :** But you say it should be 100 per cent. Indian?

**A.** I mean the capital should be Indian.

**Chairman :** The paid staff to be combined. I understood you correctly. The control should be Indian. The capital should be Indian. The employees may be anybody. But I thought it might be better in the interests of the country that there should be a combination of foreign and Indian talent, having regard to the lack of knowledge and enterprise in India?

**A.** Why, even in England they make a definition of what is a British picture. A British picture is such when the capital is British. They mention that clearly, otherwise a foreign producer could open out a studio in England and call it British.

**Q.** I know. You are right there?

**A.** Otherwise what is there to prevent foreign concerns from opening out studios in Great Britain and calling such productions British pictures.

**Q.** Just see the definition on page 136 of this book?

**Mr. Neogy :** They have even fixed the percentage of the salary to be paid to the British staff.

**Chairman :** You think you would adopt it?

**A.** Absolutely. I think it is perfectly right.

**Q.** You would adopt the same definition for an Indian film?

**A.** Absolutely.

**Q.** And you think such facilities as Governments or states can give should be confined to such cases and all and sundry should not be permitted to go abroad simply because they come and have offices here?

**A.** Quite.

**Q.** That leads me to another question, the importance of which you probably do not recognise, namely as regards the registration of places of production and producers. Only people who come on a register—it need not be necessarily for inspection purposes—should be allowed to produce pictures in India. Otherwise how are you going to effect your object? Anyone who wants to produce a picture ought to come on a register, to be maintained

in this country. In that way registration will be a useful method of encouraging film production in this country?

A. From that point of view it is desirable.

Q. And you don't object to it?

A. If that point is emphasised, I don't object to it.

Mr. Green : In that respect you would wish to amend your written statement?

A. In that case, yes.

Chairman : Now, I come to censorship. You are satisfied with the present system of censorship generally here?

A. So far, yes. As long as further restrictions are not placed on the exhibitors.

Q. You are aware in Calcutta the Indian element is very poor on the board?

A. Oh yes. There are just two members.

Q. Don't you think it is desirable there should be a larger Indian element?

A. I don't think any harm would be done.

Q. But do you think it is desirable?

A. I think it is desirable to have fifty per cent.

Q. Of course, non-official majority there is. But the Indian element should be at least 50 per cent.?

A. There should be more Indians.

Q. You believe as a matter of practical politics, having regard to the experience you have got, that it would produce a very great hardship on the trade if every film were subjected to examination by 2 or more members of the board, instead of its being done by a paid inspector? He will be there to advise. But at the same time, every film before it is passed or rejected must be seen by 2 or more members themselves?

A. I think the present system is quite good as it is now. But as you say if you have a larger percentage of Indians on the board, it would be welcome.

Q. You wouldn't mind. You don't think it will produce delays?

A. I don't think so.

Q. You think it would be a more satisfactory system of censorship—the way I suggest, namely, having a paid inspector?

A. No, I don't think that would be the right thing to do. I think the system prevailing now is quite good. The only suggestion is that we should have a greater percentage of Indians on the advisory board.

Q. You would not advocate the system I have mentioned, that every film should be passed by 2 or more members of the board?

A. I think the present system is quite good.

Q. It may be good. But supposing I take the view that it is better that each film should be examined by 2 or more members of the board, do you think that it will produce any practical inconvenience to the trade?

A. No, it won't.

Q. The other aspect on which I want your advice is—do you think that a sufficient number of Indians or Englishmen can be found in Calcutta to do the job, say, for 2 days in the week, 2 or 3 hours a day?

A. As long as the present system is quite satisfactory, there is no need.

Q. You don't answer my point. I quite see your point of view is that the present system is quite good. But supposing I take the view that it will be more satisfactory that each film were examined by 2 or more members of the board with the assistance of an expert paid inspector, is there any practical difficulty, I want to find out?

A. No, except the expense—looking at it from that point of view.



**Q.** I suppose you would agree, if the public or the Government are entrusted with the censoring of films in order to protect public morality or public peace, I suppose there will be a legitimate cause for spending public money on such a purpose?

**A.** As long as the state is not burdened with it.

**Q.** You think the burden on the trade for the purpose of examination is too heavy? You know you pay very little as compared with the trade in England?

**A.** They pay 20 shillings per thousand foot. It is quite reasonable.

**Q.** Not only reasonable. It is moderate?

**A.** Well, we have to consider the heavy customs tariff and the amusement tax and everything.

**Q.** But having regard to the penalty on the public?

**A.** But having regard to what the industry has to pay I think it is not too little.

**Q.** Very well, then if extra expenses are needed in that direction on account of the public, and Government are so much interested in censoring, they must pay at least a portion of it? The tax-payer must pay for it?

**A.** If the censorship fees are not adequate and the customs tariff is high, they can make a draft on it. They can earmark a portion of the customs tariff towards it.

**Q.** You are in touch with the educated Indian youth of the city of Calcutta?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Do you think they have any more opportunities of getting spoilt by going to the cinema than by going to the theatre?

**A.** I am of a different opinion. I think it is a good form of education through entertainment.

**Q.** I know. But is there any risk?

**A.** I don't see any risk. The present censorship is quite adequate to cut out that element of risk.

**Q.** Some people are not satisfied?

**A.** There is some difference of opinion but you have to take the views of the majority.

**Q.** What I want to know is whether the educated youths in Calcutta city, students and others, have they got equal opportunities of seeing similar things in the theatres?—both Indian and European?

**A.** Absolutely. I don't see why the cinema should be distinguished.

**Q.** Now, as regards posters. What do you do generally? You get posters along with foreign films?

**A.** They come along with the films—and sometimes we get them ahead.

**Q.** But surely you get them at the same time as you get the films for the purpose of producing them for censorship?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Then you get the film censored only after they come here?

**A.** Quite right.

**Q.** So that you get them in time for the censorship—I mean posters accompanying films?

**A.** They are never censored.

**Q.** I mean they come along with the films?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** So that they will be available if the censor wants to see them?

**A.** But why should posters be censored to begin with?

**Q.** I am taking you step by step. It would be available?

A. Yes.

Q. And do you print any handbills here of your own after you get the films here?

A. Yes.

Q. In the vernacular?

A. In the vernacular as well as in English. I am talking about the handbills.

Q. You get only posters? You don't get handbills?

A. Sometimes we do get coloured leaflets ready printed—with a blank for the name of the theatre.

Q. In addition to that, you print handbills?

A. Yes.

Q. That you do after the films are censored?

A. Yes.

Q. And when you are about to exhibit them?

A. Yes.

Q. Probably you print them in each centre separately—in Bombay and Madras?

A. Quite right.

Q. So that in the case of these handbills if we instituted a censorship, it would not be practicable.

A. No. And I don't see any reason for it. It is not necessary.

Q. Apart from the reason—I am considering whether it would be practicable?

A. No.

Q. Now as regards posters which you get along with the films. What is your objection to showing them?

A. It is not practicable. We get 24 posters and other signs. It would cover the space of this wall here and it would not be possible to open out all the posters and have them censored.

Q. You get a large number perhaps?

A. Yes, of each film.

Q. For distribution to your several centres?

A. Probably they may go by the hundreds. We get all sorts of posters. So it is not practicable. And it would inconvenience the trade to a very very great extent.

Q. Have you received many complaints about the contents of the posters?

A. None whatsoever. Except that we were told by a member of the advisory board about a certain poster of a film called "Dance Madness." I wonder if I have the poster here. I should like the committee to see it. There was no objection made in writing but it was just mentioned to us.

*(The poster was shown.)*

Q. So this is the one that was mentioned?

A. I think I heard Sir Charles Tegart saying he had received an objection from Sir John Shea on behalf of the Commander-in-Chief that this poster was objectionable as likely to affect the morals of the British troops.

Q. This is the very same poster?

A. I am quite sure about it.

Q. I don't want you to make a mistake?

A. I am absolutely sure about it.

Q. No objection has been taken to it in writing?

A. Not in writing. I don't know if he mentioned that he did so in writing.

**Mr. Green :** I have heard your remarks about pirating. Granted that there are difficulties in the way, are not your existing rights under the law sufficient? You can move the Courts?

**A.** There has not been any concrete case to go on, but there was one case launched against a certain party in Rangoon regarding a serial called "The Son of Tarzan." In that case a compromise was arrived at.

**Q.** Can you suggest any definite legislation which would be effective in stopping this?

**A.** The whole trouble is that no Court has ever passed a decision on the question of film copyright and its infringement in India and the lawyers have been somewhat concerned as to the best procedure.

**Q.** You want special legislation on film copyright on the ground that it is quite different from other kinds of copyrights existing?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** You have no definite suggestions to make on the subject?

**A.** We leave that to Government. They are the best judges in the matter. The censorship board should not be allowed to issue licenses for all these pirated copies.

**Q.** You want the censorship board to have semi-judicial powers?

**A.** They have not.

**Q.** You want them to have?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Would you welcome a suggestion that the censorship board should have power to withhold a certificate pending decision by a Court, somewhat similar to the way in which the customs authorities will withhold goods under an indemnity if a complaint is made that those goods have infringed Trade Mark or copyright . . . ?

**A.** If legislation could be brought in on some such lines it would be the best procedure.

**Q.** In paragraph 14 of your statement you indicate that it would be cheaper to import educational films than to make them?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Our difficulty has been this, that everybody has told us that foreign educational films, with very rare exceptions, are useless in this country?

**A.** They have some educational value . . .

**Q.** What do you mean by educational?

**A.** Mining . . .

**Q.** Education in the broad sense of the term, travel and so on?

**A.** That too.

**Q.** You do not suggest that it will be possible, say, for the Agricultural Department in India to get films from abroad showing the best Indian methods of growing cotton, jute, rice, etc.?

**A.** I see your point. I quite agree with you, but still there is some value in the imported films dealing with these subjects.

**Q.** But the authorities concerned with education, agriculture and so on who have come before us, have impressed on us very strongly the need for such educational films being very much of the country, showing not only Indian methods and Indian men and women, but actual scenes in the province in which the film is to be exhibited, otherwise it would not have much value?

**A.** I see it.

**Q.** It is not possible to import those?

**A.** No, but what I mean is this, that if a film of such a nature could be imported from abroad it would help.

**Q.** Your studio is presumably fairly busy producing films at present?

A. Yes, but we have always got a set of camera men and if we get any orders from Rajahs or Maharajahs to film any function, we can undertake that kind of work also.

Q. Can you state approximately what you would charge for such films to order?

A. If we know the nature of the work we are prepared to work on a very reasonable basis if we get regular business. If we get 10 per cent. on the whole expenditure we should be content.

Q. You are enlarging your studio and presumably you desire to increase your output because you have said that there is an unsatisfied demand in India for Indian films?

A. Yes.

Q. Obviously I take it we may assume that you are doing this because as a successful business man, you expect a very good return on your money?

A. Yes.

Q. Will you be prepared to supply films for other people at less than the profit you would make on your own films?

A. If we can make 10 per cent. on the total expenditure we are prepared to do it.

Q. Even though you may get 20 per cent. on your entertainment films?

A. It does not matter. If we can get business, I, as a business man, do not see why we should lose that 10 per cent. even.

Q. Coming still further down, the Government securities earn approximately 5 per cent. would you be willing to work for 6 per cent.? Would you do that if you could make 20 per cent. on your own entertainment films?

A. I would not lose the business that comes to me. I would welcome it. We have men on our staff and we can regulate our business in such a way . . .

Q. Not being a business man, I should like to know why you should be content with producing films for others and getting 10 per cent. profit when you can get 20 per cent. on your own films?

A. We can spare our camera men in certain cases . . .

Q. Have you not also to supply the direction? A mere camera man will not do. Possibly actors?

A. Surely. So far as entertainment films are concerned you need a director, but if it is a topical film or a film depicting an educational subject I do not see why it cannot be done.

Q. I am trying to get at the fact, when there is an unsatisfied demand for entertainment films which will yield a good profit . . .?

A. But we will be increasing our organisation at the same time as the volume of work goes on increasing.

Q. This assumes that you will have, by that time, fully satisfied the demand for Indian entertainment films?

A. There is room for improvement every time.

Q. And yet you would be content to undertake less paying work?

A. I can regulate my studio operation in such a way that it will not interfere with my work . . .

Chairman : You will take it as additional work?

A. Yes.

Q. Why should you do it for 10 per cent. when you can make 20 per cent.?

A. We can manipulate the studio in such a way that it will not interfere . . .

Mr. Coatsman : If you are sure to get a regular supply of Government orders for films for propaganda purposes could you not use those orders in the same way as municipalities and county boards in England do—they undertake their work in times of unemployment to relieve unemployment. For example, the municipalities and county boards know they have to build so many miles of roads, or so many public offices, but they do not take those

orders in hand at once. They wait till there is a danger of unemployment and then they alleviate unemployment by working on these orders. Could you not use Government orders for propaganda films in the same way, so that when you have a period of slump you start work on Government propaganda films . . . ?

A. If we have our studio in operation there is no question of the work not being done regularly. We can work at any time. What I want by taking Government orders is this, it would mean not only publicity to Madan Theatres but at the same time for the benefit of the promotion of the Indian film industry we would take up this work.

Q. I would like to have a clearer answer to Mr. Green's question about different rates of return.

Colonel Crawford : Let us say you have got six cameras and six camera men, you can now get 20 per cent. return by putting these cameras on to the production of entertainment films. If there is any time available for one camera man you will put him on to make more entertainment films in order to get the full sixteen annas worth. You will say, "I am a business man and I do not see why I should not make the utmost out of my business?"

A. We want to gain publicity for our work and at the same time to promote the Indian film industry.

Mr. Green : Have you ever been asked to quote for the production of propaganda films by any department of Government?

A. I could not tell you.

Q. Nor can you tell us, presumably, what footage rates you would quote?

A. I could tell you that in camera.

Q. In answer to question No. 16 you say you would require expert assistance from abroad. Does that mean that you contemplate bringing out such experts?

A. Yes.

Q. By experts you mean technical experts?

A. Yes.

Q. Including direction, in the technical sense?

A. Yes.

Q. Technical men, men for camera, for developing?

A. We have developing here.

Q. Actors, stars?

A. Not a large number, but just a couple of them.

Q. You would use these people if you were given Government work also . . . ?

Chairman : It is rather speculative as to what he will do under certain circumstances.

Mr. Green : I was interested in the list of British films you gave us and in particular I noticed one which I thought was an American film, namely, "The Only Way." The actors were British or most of them were, but was that produced by an English house or an American house?

A. I will tell you definitely a little later.

Q. Do you consider British films are improving?

A. They are improving in their standard.

Q. And you are prepared to exhibit a certain number of them?

A. We have taken over some, but the prices are so prohibitive at times that I should say . . .

Q. I am not asking you that?

A. If we think the picture is good from the box office point of view and the price is reasonable . . .

Q. I take it the commercial value is improving?

A. The standard of production is improving.

**Q.** Does not that affect box office receipts?

**A.** It depends upon the prices at the same time and the subject also.

**Q.** You are in favour of a reciprocal exchange of films in answer to question No. 23 (a). You mean through the good offices of the different Governments and not by any particular legislative scheme or anything of that kind?

**A.** No, but through the Governments.

**Q.** I want to put one or two questions about what Chairman asked you about the place, if any, for a central board?

**A.** I would suggest Calcutta for this reason . . .

**Q.** You have given us your reasons, but when you are so positive that this is the biggest importing port, have you referred to the official customs figures showing the total footage imported?

**A.** We took ours from the Censor Board's figures.

**Q.** The Chairman has told you that in Bombay it is 50 per cent. more than in Calcutta?

*Chairman :* Do you get your films through Bombay or do they come straight to Calcutta?

**A.** Straight to Calcutta.

**Q.** By steamer?

**A.** We do land in Bombay also.

*Mr. Green :* You do import in Bombay?

**A.** Yes.

*Chairman :* You get your American films through Bombay by post?

**A.** Yes. In many cases we get them direct by steamer from America.

**Q.** Not in all cases?

**A.** No.

*Mr. Green :* Some of your stuff comes by post through Bombay?

**A.** Yes. There is another point. There are a few miscellaneous importers in Karachi and Lahore who send their films to be censored in Bombay at present. But if it was Calcutta they would come over here.

**Q.** You suggest in your answer to question No. 42 that there should be co-operation between the Board of Censors and the trade. You want definite representation on the Board of Censors?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** You mean the trade?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** How many representatives do you contemplate?

**A.** You can just have one representative from the trade.

**Q.** One representative could represent all the different houses?

**A.** We can come to an understanding.

**Q.** The trade is sufficiently united in its different branches, namely, production, distribution and exhibition?

**A.** From the exhibitors' point of view I am talking.

**Q.** Then you recognise there are other points of view?

**A.** It amounts to the same thing, it comes to the exhibition side eventually.

**Q.** Supposing the representative—I will put it baldly to you—was not one of your own men, would you be afraid of your trade secrets leaking out?

**A.** By having a representative of the trade there will be some sort of a feeling of co-operation between the Board of Censors and the trade. At present if the Board should reject a certain picture we have no say in the matter at all.

**Q.** One of the statutory rules of the Board of Censors is that it is the duty of the Board to hear any representation from the members of the trade, and

it is open to you to ask for an interview with the Board and to make any representation you like?

A. After the picture has been banned, if the exhibitor feels that that picture could be passed with the necessary cuts and submits it to the Board of Censors, would they examine that film once again?

Q. They do it in Bombay and I think they would in Calcutta?

A. Even after they are banned?

Q. Yes. Certainly they do it in Bombay and I imagine they do so in Calcutta?

A. Is it so?

*Chairman* : Did you try it at any time yourself?

A. We tried it before the picture was banned.

Q. And what was the result?

A. In the one instance of a particular picture, called I think "The Arab," the Inspector who saw that picture objected to the theme of it and we suggested that we would rectify the sub-titles and re-submit it for his inspection. The picture was passed. There is another picture now in dispute, called "The Only Thing." The censors were of opinion that the picture was objectionable from certain standpoints,—scenes depicting revolution,—but they could be manipulated in a way that would not give that aspect at all. Of course, I could go into a lengthy discussion on that point. We are just altering that subject.

Q. You have no instance where you offered to give assistance to the Board and that was rejected?

A. No. Before it was banned we did that.

*Mr. Green* : As regards every film being seen by at least two members of the Board before issuing a certificate—how many members are there on the Board here now?

A. 7 or 8.

Q. When you put up a film for censorship, you want it to be censored within a certain definite period?

A. Yes.

Q. I take it most of the members of the Board are fairly busy men?

A. Yes.

Q. At present if a film is challenged by the Inspector it goes before a sub-committee, and there may be some little delay before that sub-committee is arranged and meets to examine the film. If every film has to have a sub-committee of 2, is there not likely to be more delay?

A. That is for the Board to decide.

Q. You know approximately the amount of examination work done at present?

A. Yes.

Q. I take it that takes at least 2 hours a day or even more. That, I presume, is likely to increase?

A. Yes.

Q. The question I want to ask you is whether you could get ladies and gentlemen in this town who would be able to spend that time?

A. That is the main question. I was asked the question and I said it would be welcome if it was possible, and provided it did not cost us anything more.

Q. Supposing it was found that the only way of making it possible was to increase the number of members of the Board twofold, threefold or fourfold—you are not frightened it might lead to diverse standards of censorship?

A. No, if you can find the right sort of people.

Q. You can find 50 amiable ladies and gentlemen, but you cannot guarantee they will have the same opinion?

A. It would be difficult.

Q. You would object strongly to any further fees for censorship. You consider Rs. 5—a 1,000 feet is as much as the trade can stand?

A. Yes, in the present state of affairs.

Q. Any other fees required for the purpose of censorship, you think, ought to be met by Government out of the general revenues—I gather so from your replies to the Chairman?

A. Yes.

Q. You have told us that the cinema has just scratched the surface, that is to say, out of the population of India, only an infinitesimal portion have any interest in the cinema?

A. Yes.

Q. The general revenues of this country are supplied by the general mass of the population?

A. Yes.

Q. How would you justify the suggestion that the general revenues which are supplied by the general taxpayer should be devoted to an object which only interests something less than probably one per cent. of it?

A. A portion of the customs tariff could be ear-marked in that case—from the importation of films.

Q. The customs taxation on any imported film comes out of whose pocket?

A. Naturally the exhibitor imports the film and it comes out of his pocket.

Q. What you are giving with one hand you are taking away with the other hand?

A. You should not increase it any further. Our own position is this that the cinema industry is paying very much more than it could possibly stand.

Q. How would you view a suggestion that instead of having further taxation as such—after all taxation is usually imposed for collecting general revenue—you should have a special cess, such as they have in the tea trade, the jute trade and certain other trades, for the benefit of the industry as a whole? The ear-marking of a particular customs revenue it is said is unsound finance, and that is why I am asking you about a cess. It is hardly fair to ask you whether a cess would be preferable because you have not presumably thought over it?

A. No.

*Colonel Crawford:* In going through your answers I see you have no written agreement generally with proprietors of these theatres binding them to take their supply from you. You give these exhibitors who deal with you the right of selection?

A. For our theatres all these pictures are selected and that is of some value.

Q. Selection after you have had a first run?

A. After we have run the pictures here; it should help them to find out which would appeal.

Q. Are you giving selections of pictures from all foreign countries?

A. Yes. We get pictures from Germany, France, Italy, America, Great Britain.

Q. What is your system of rental with them? Hire system or percentage system?

A. I will tell you that in camera.

Q. I just want to take up the question of children. It is obvious I think that cinema is strong meat for young children, that it presents to them things in a very vivid light which sometimes depresses them or excites them unduly?

A. All I have to say in this matter is that the parents are naturally very careful.



Q. You think it is the parent's job and you do not think that the State should step in to protect the children?

A. Yes. Every parent has some regard for his children.

Q. You do not think that there is any need for the State to step in?

A. No.

Q. Have you ever tried vernacular captions for your western pictures?

A. Yes, for big pictures which we considered to be attractive.

Q. That would make it more successful?

A. It has been successful.

Q. What European pictures?

A. Certain types of European pictures.

Q. Have you to get those new captions re-censored?

A. Yes. That is merely translation of the thing which has been passed by the Censor.

Q. Have you not got to have vernacular captions re-censored?

A. It is not done anywhere.

Q. Under the law it must be?

A. The situation is this. In the case of Indian pictures, it is the English as well as the vernacular which goes through the Censors. In the case of big pictures they are first shown in Bombay under a vernacular title and they are censored there.

Q. That is Western films?

A. Yes.

Q. I want to know about these Western pictures, like "The Thief of Baghdad" or "Benhur"—do you supply those with vernacular captions?

A. They are made in Bombay.

Q. And you make the captions before you submit the film for censorship?

A. Yes, it is censored with the Indian title.

Q. At the original censoring?

A. Yes, it is censored.

Q. Do you find it a good business?

A. Naturally, in the case of special films which we think will go very well with the Indian masses.

Q. You have never thought of doing it for all your Western pictures?

A. It would not pay. It pays only for a certain type of film.

Q. Then I come down to your remark about the paucity of output of good Indian films depicting the life of the country?

A. Well production here is still in its infancy; there is room for great improvement and development.

Q. What is holding it back to-day?

A. Well, we want more pictures.

Q. I know, but why is it that there is no supply? There is this market?

A. Lack of finance.

Q. I will take up that question of lack of finance later. You say that your European audiences and your educated Indian audiences have a preference for foreign films and you give as the reason, the poor quality of the Indian production. Now is that the only reason?

A. And the story appeals to them more also.

Q. There is a greater variety of story?

A. Yes.

Q. And always will be a greater variety from the West than you will ever be able to get out of Indian life?

A. That is true. Subjects from mythology will be of no interest to them.

**Q.** Not to Europeans. I was thinking more of educated Indians for the moment?

**A.** The Educated Indian would like Indian pictures.

**Q.** You think he won't want a wider experience than can be obtained solely from Indian pictures. Assuming our quality to be absolutely as good as the American quality, is he still going to see only Indian pictures?

**A.** Pictures of local interest will be of interest to Indians.

**Q.** I am talking of the educated Indian?

**A.** Well educated Indians will have foreign films but at the same time they won't run down Indian pictures.

**Q.** I don't say anybody will run down Indian pictures. An audience comes and pays to see what they want to see?

**A.** An educated Indian would naturally prefer a foreign film.

**Q.** It is not only a question of quality but he wants to have the wider experience and greater variety to be obtained from outside pictures than from inside pictures?

**A.** Quite right.

**Q.** Regarding the inadequacy of the supply of films for British troops, have the military authorities ever made any representations to you on that subject?

**A.** No.

**Q.** I don't know whether you would desire to answer any questions on monopoly,—I am not suggesting for a moment that there is a monopoly—in camera or now. The question I would like to ask is supposing you were to get a monopoly of exhibition in this country, is that going to be for the good or to the disadvantage of the public?

**A.** From my point of view all I say is this, that if my organisation does it in the right way I don't see any harm in it.

**Q.** But are there any definite advantages arising out of it, do you think? Supposing you could combine the cinema interests in this country into a big combine, are there any advantages to be gained from such a process?

**A.** We shall be exceeding too much our powers to say that, but we could improve the standard of production here. We are doing so even now. We are trying to adopt methods which we think are necessary.

**Q.** In answer to question No. 9 on this question of monopoly you say in Poona and Kirkee you took over the management in the case of the West End Theatre about 3 years ago and in the case of the other theatres only a year ago. "The lessees of the respective theatres approached us and requested us to take them over." They were then not making the shows pay?

**A.** In any case it was not paying them or they would not have made the theatre over to us.

**Q.** I was just wondering what their difficulties were. Finance again?

**A.** They could not run the show properly or something like that, but I cannot speak for them.

**Q.** You say the system of block booking does exist in India?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Now is block booking essential to the producer?

**A.** It will be beneficial to the producer.

**Q.** But is it essential to him?

**A.** It is essential to him from his point of view in that he wants a market for all his pictures. It is not good from the public's point of view. It is not good from the Exhibitor's point of view either.

**Q.** But it is good from the producer's point of view. Now supposing you want to stop block booking. Can you suggest any method as to how we can stop block booking? Take the block booking of foreign films first?

A. The best solution of the problem would be that producers should not be allowed to sell, say, for instance, more than 20 pictures at a time; 20 would be the maximum for a producer to go into a contract with an exhibitor for; but the exhibitor should not be made to buy more than 20 at a time in one block. The exhibitor can select others if he likes but the producer should not be able to say "You have got to take all this."

Q. Can they enforce that in America?

A. I don't know about America but I think something is being done in England now. My only suggestion is this, that producers should not be made to contract for more than 20 pictures with any one exhibitor and that would be a safeguard to the exhibitor. For the sake of 2 or 3 good pictures he should not be compelled to buy 30 or 40 or 80 others unless he chooses to do so himself.

Q. Now regarding the selection of your pictures from the West, do you keep a man?

A. We go regularly.

Q. What do you mean?

A. We have an agent.

Q. Has he any knowledge of the Indian market?

A. He has studied the market and he knows, from the orders we place through him, what type of pictures go here. We are constantly in touch with him.

Q. But you have never thought of picking your man here and sending him?

A. We ourselves are always coming into personal contact with our agents there and they share our views.

Q. You have never definitely thought of picking a man out here and shoving him into the office of your agent there?

A. We find the present system quite satisfactory.

Q. It works quite all right?

A. Yes.

Q. You have opportunities of giving pre-view exhibitions of films?

A. As far as the production in India is concerned if any exhibitor wants to see a picture before he buys it, he is welcome. We do not give a special trade show.

Q. But for Western films you have got to buy on paper?

A. Oh no, we know what we are buying.

Q. Now regarding educational films, would you have any objection to our forcing you to show one 500 foot educational picture in every programme?

A. None; provided you have the necessary films on hand to show, we would not object to it.

Q. Do you think your audiences will object?

A. No, it will be like the topical budget. I don't see why they should object to an educational film being put on; but the main difficulty is we have not been able to get the requisite number of educational films. But personally we would not object to it.

Q. You do not think it would affect your audiences?

A. On the contrary I think they will like it.

Q. Now on the social aspect, you say although the social customs between the West and the East may be different it does not necessitate special consideration in the censorship of films in this country. Now when you are producing an Indian film I notice you are very much inclined to suit your sex conduct in that film to the requirements of Indians?

A. Yes. You are referring to that particular scene you saw in the studio.

Q. You pointed it out in one particular scene. It has struck me in all Indian films?

A. I just wanted to draw your attention to it. That is just a more. The Indian does it in his way and he knows the Westerner does it in the other way. There is nothing objectionable.

Q. This is the custom of the country; if Indians, like Europeans, indulge in the habit of kissing, they indulge in it in a private room, but in the Indian film you do not show true life?

A. We show it in our own way.

Q. But that is not the way it is done in actual Indian life. It is done in the privacy of the house. You obviously adopt that attitude for some particular reason—that is, your Indian audience would not stand anything else?

A. No, in his own pictures he would not, but the Indian is quite conversant with the ways of other peoples.

Q. You think he likes it in Western pictures?

A. He does not see any objection in it because he realises it is the custom, the way and the manner of the land.

Q. It is not offensive to him?

A. No, I don't think so.

Q. Now as regards the possibility of a Central Board of Censors, would not one board satisfy your purposes really. Do you think there will be any difficulty in having to have your films passed through two or three boards?

A. If one Censor could decide once for all for the whole of India, it would be perfectly all right.

Q. Would that be an advantage?

A. It would be; but in fairness to all exhibitors it would not be right that exhibitors in Calcutta or Bombay should have their films going to and fro in order to have them censored in one or other centre. Speaking for myself I would prefer Calcutta.

Q. I am trying to get at whether one board would be more convenient, irrespective of location,—one certificate covering the whole territory, instead of your bumping up against three different censorship boards on moral grounds?

A. The main question is of location.

Q. Now supposing you locate the board at Bombay. You see most of your films actually pass through Bombay, either for exhibition at Bombay or *en route* to Calcutta; would you set up your particular place at that port?

A. The major portion of our films we get by steamer direct to Calcutta.

Q. But that is a matter for arrangement. You won't import to Bombay, you will import direct from America to Calcutta.

A. That is one side of the matter. Another side is that we have our head office here in Calcutta and we distribute everything from here. We have our staff and experienced people on this side. It means having two establishments, in Bombay as well as in Calcutta, having two film storages, which would mean an additional expense.

Q. But you would store the films only in one place, in Bombay.

A. It is impossible. We naturally prefer Calcutta, we have our staff here. This is the registered office of the company.

Q. You have some staff in Bombay at present?

A. But they are not capable enough to cope with the work. They are only capable of looking after their own needs; everything is done here from Calcutta.

Q. He could not control the distribution portion if the centre were in Bombay?

A. He would not be able to handle it.

**Q.** I am just wondering whether it is really very difficult. If a central board were there, that being a definite advantage, would you not say "I will locate the whole of my business in that place."

**A.** There should be two boards, one in Calcutta and one in Bombay.

**Mr. Green:** What about Rangoon?

**A.** They don't bring out so many films. What is the importation of Rangoon?

**Colonel Crawford:** I notice you stand for a central appellate authority. Would you like that authority to co-ordinate the work between the Calcutta and Bombay boards, to get them to take the same standard and not have any difference of practice.

**A.** In the case of films passed in Bombay and banned in Bengal, the exhibitor should have the right of appeal to this appellate board. It should not be located at one place.

**Q.** I quite understand the appellate portion of it, but I want to know whether you would like it also to co-ordinate the working of all boards in India.

**A.** Oh, yes.

**Q.** Would you like it to be a co-ordinating authority as well and keep them all up to the same standard for the sake of uniformity?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Is there much importation of cheap films? I see this territory is a cheap market.

**A.** There are certain exhibitors who get second-hand films and show them.

**Q.** But on the whole it is a small market?

**A.** There is nothing to prevent exhibitors from getting them.

**Q.** No, no. I don't mean that. The Indian territory is a very small market for the film industry?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** It does not produce an enormous amount in the way of money?

**A.** Yes.

**Chairman:** Can you tell us how much per annum you pay for foreign films, how much India pays?

**A.** I can let you know about that later.

**Colonel Crawford:** Could you give us any idea at the same time as to what the public spends on the cinemas, an approximate idea? Would it be too big a job?

**A.** Yes, Sir.

**Q.** What I was trying to get at was that the exhibition market is not big in India.

**A.** It is growing.

**Q.** And it is bound to limit the amount you can spend on the production of any film. If you were to spend a lakh of rupees on an Indian picture, does the Indian market give you an opportunity to get your money back? A lakh of rupees is after all a very small sum in film production.

**A.** It is, but if it is produced in the way it should be, I think they should get the revenue from the land.

**Q.** The market is big enough?

**A.** Yes, if it is done in the right way.

**Chairman:** Even with the existing number of theatres?

**A.** Yes, if it is done the right way, if the film has a box-office value, then I say it will.

**Colonel Crawford:** Is there the money in the country coming to the cinemas to enable you to spend that amount on the production of a film?

A. Not that. We could create the taste, we could get people to come and see those kinds of pictures. You have to create that kind of market. It all depends on the nature of the production, no matter what you spend.

Q. Supposing you go all out and make 10 lakh pictures.

A. The amount spent does not make the difference. I have known a picture produced in America which costs tens of thousands of dollars to have a greater box-office value than a picture costing more. It all depends on the type of picture and its box-office value. It is the way you handle your production.

Q. My whole point was that in India alone there is not sufficient money available to recover the cost of production of pictures.

*Chairman:* Supposing you produce the best picture, the best art and photography and all that, you will capture the market?

A. It might turn out to be a "dud." It all depends on the box-office value of the picture.

*Colonel Crawford:* Have you tried to place your pictures in the international market?

A. Yes. We have just managed to sell two abroad. Of course, the quality was not up to the standard. There were lots of room for improvement. "The Life of Buddha" and "Pampered Youth" were the two films.

*Chairman:* What happened to them after you sold them?

A. We know nothing about that. We sold to Austria, Hungary, Greece, Poland and the Balkan States.

*Colonel Crawford:* Have you ever tried the production of a film of international interest like "Kim"?

A. There is an American firm in America that has the rights for "Kim."

Q. Why do you allow the Americans to step in?

A. It is not in our hands. They have the rights from Rudyard Kipling. When I was in New York, Maude Adams told me that she was interested in it.

Q. Have you ever tried some of the Frontier stories of Maud Diver, like "Captain Desmond," which might have a market in England?

A. Until you have your studio on those modern lines, it is no use attempting subjects for the foreign market.

*Mr. Green:* You must have a good studio first?

A. That is absolutely necessary.

*Colonel Crawford:* Talking of the requirements of your audiences in this country, audiences cannot be forced to come to the theatre?

A. No.

Q. If you are forced to show pictures which your audience does not want...

A. The houses would drop off, the people would not come.

Q. Would they make entertainment for themselves elsewhere?

A. Sure, because they will have to have some other amusement.

Q. And if we force these things, we are likely definitely to damage the cinema exhibitor for good?

A. Quite right.

Q. Are your European audiences of any great value to you?

A. Certainly. For the cinemas existing in European localities we rely on our European customers.

Q. Do they bring the greatest bulk of your returns?

A. Certainly, in those theatres which cater for them.

*Chairman:* And they encourage the social drama?

A. Yes.

Q. Where the underworld is depicted?

A. The censorship takes care of all that.

Q. They encourage it and yet they complain?

A. Whether the censorship is lax or strict, there is bound to be a certain amount of complaint.

*Colonel Crawford:* I rather protest against that remark of the Chairman.

*Chairman:* What is it you protest against in that?

*Colonel Crawford:* I do not think it was quite called for. What I want to know is you think you as an exhibitor will be definitely harmed by forcing a quota of Indian films on your West End theatres.

A. Certainly. I could not expect my European patrons to come and see those pictures.

Q. Will they grow to like them or are they likely to go off to other forms of entertainment?

A. They will take to other forms of amusement until we can satisfy them that we can come up to that standard. That is for the producer to do.

Q. Were you in difficulties after the War due to the general slump in the entertainment trade; you were not making much money after the war?

A. No, Sir.

Q. And there was a general slump in the entertainment trade of all sorts, due largely to the economic conditions of the people. Simultaneously with that an amusement tax was introduced?

A. Yes.

Q. And it is difficult for us to say whether the amusement tax has at present harmed you or whether the public are prepared to stand the tax or not?

A. The very fact that after 4 years we have only been able to pay a dividend of 2½ per cent. shows that we are not doing so much.

Q. But that may be due, not so much to the amusement tax, as to economic conditions.

A. The amusement tax has a great deal to do with it and if economic conditions are not so good at the time, that is all the more reason why the amusement tax should be abolished.

Q. It was introduced at an unfortunate period, but I was just wondering whether the economic conditions after the War were not more responsible for the slump than anything else.

A. In my opinion both were responsible.

Q. Now on the question of Indian capital, is Indian capital forthcoming in adequate quantity?

A. Indian capital is shy for this reason that producers have not shown yet that they can produce the right stuff.

Q. Isn't it shy in all industries?

A. It is, unless you show some remunerative results; naturally the financier would expect something on his outlay. It is quite natural. Our standard of films has improved enormously, that is a recognised fact, and considering the fact that we are looking ahead, I don't see any reason why we cannot improve the quality further.

Q. Supposing we were to insist on the quota system to show a certain number of Indian pictures in India, then comes in the definition of what is an "Indian film." You suggest that we should define it by saying that it must be Indian capital to the extent of at least 75 per cent. That is quite a reasonable proposition. And yet you tell me that Indian capital is shy and is not forthcoming?

A. For this reason that the standard of Indian pictures, produced now, is not quite as it should be. But as I have said, there is a decided improvement, and there is a bright future before them.

*Chairman:* You said that Indian capital is not forthcoming and you suggest to us that we should define the term "Indian produced film" to mean that it must be all Indian capital?

A. There have been one or two instances where Indian financiers have come forward. I am told that Shankaracharya was financed by an Indian. I think in course of time Indian capital will be forthcoming.

Q. Do you want the control of capital to be dictated by the Government or by the shareholders?

A. If there was any Government control, it would restrict the scope for private enterprise in any shape or form. As long as there is the requisite percentage of Indian capital and a proper Indian *personnel* I don't think Government should step in at all. I would not worry about the control exercised by Indian capitalists upon the Board of Directors.

*Colonel Crawford:* What is the definition of Indian capital?

A. What I mean is that no foreign producing unit should be allowed to establish itself here.

Q. Would Europeans resident in India be allowed to invest and open a producing concern?

A. If it is a British Empire concern, it will be all right, but it should not be a foreign concern.

Q. You would not mind having capital from the British Empire or from the Indian Empire?

A. I don't think any harm will be done by that.

Q. I only wanted to know what the definition of "Indian capital" should be?

A. I mean cent. per cent. capital should be Indian, and no foreign producing units should be allowed to open a studio here. If you allow such a thing to be done, then you could not possibly call their productions Indian productions: it would be unfair to call them as such.

Q. All the shares of the Madan Theatres, Ltd., are held by Indians?

A. Both by Indians and Europeans.

Q. All I want to know is, if I want to get an Indian picture produced here, what will be the definition of "Indian capital"? How much money should I have to put in it?

A. As long as the shares are held by British Indian subjects the control should be on the same percentage as in Great Britain, but there should be a majority of British Indian subjects on the Board of any such company.

*Mr. Coatsman:* I suppose you spend a fair amount of money for advertising. Can you tell us offhand what percentage of your cost goes to advertising?

A. About 25 per cent. That is for all forms of advertising.

Q. Do you consider that that represents a sufficient inducement to advertising or you would like to do more advertising?

A. We cannot afford to do more, though we should like to.

Q. From your long experience do you think that if more money were put into advertising it would bring commensurate returns?

A. We have spent more money, and we consider 25 per cent. a good return. It is quite a big amount. There are also other expenses which have to be taken into account.

Q. What proportion of your imported films is formed by American films?

A. Practically 90 per cent.

Q. And what is the other 10 per cent.?

A. British, German and French.

Q. Of those other foreign nations, which country contributes the largest part of that 10 per cent.?



A. Great Britain and Germany.

Q. Do you think their shares will be about equal?

A. Practically.

Q. Has that proportion altered in your experience?

A. I believe that better British pictures are being produced now, and the percentage will surely increase, but they have been asking very very high prices for their pictures.

Q. What is the reason for it?

A. They believe that they cannot get all their money from Great Britain, and they have to rely on other markets, but from the point of view of an exhibitor, if he can get an excellent picture for less value, he will naturally go in for it.

Q. The point I wanted to get at was this. You began in the exhibition business many years ago. Has the proportion of American films always remained the same?

A. Before the war it was less, but during and after the war it has increased.

Q. We have been told by different witnesses that British films are dull and they have no drawing power?

A. They were so in the past, but of late they have been improving their quality. But their prices are prohibitive, and considering value for value, I can even now get better pictures for a smaller price than we can get the British pictures. And from an exhibitor's point of view, if I can get a better picture for a smaller value, I would certainly go in for it.

Q. I take it that you are absolutely independent in regard to buying films, and you can buy in any market you want?

A. I am free to buy from any market I want, and there are no restrictions on me.

*Chairman:* Is there any one to bind you down at all?

A. Where there are foreign producing agencies like the First Nationals and the Universal located in India, they can get hold of the exhibitors and bind them down.

Q. Do you know if they bind down the exhibitors at all? We would like to know it because they deny it?

A. As far as we know, I think these foreign agencies bind down the exhibitors here.

*Mr. Coatsman:* Are any of your houses owned by any American producing firms or financed by them?

A. No.

Q. From your long experience do you see any chance of increasing the size of the Indian market in the near future?

A. By creating a taste for Indian pictures you can increase the size, but it is all a question of time.

Q. Would you be prepared to state any figure for the population of a town below which it would be impracticable to have a cinema there?

A. About forty thousand.

Q. I take it that you are very little affected by the Block booking system?

A. We are not affected by it, but it affects the small exhibitors who are bound down by foreign distributing agencies. We are not affected by it in any way.

*Chairman:* Do you know of any case or is it mere guess work?

A. I will give you concrete examples if you will give me time.

*Mr. Coatsman:* I suppose you imported "The Thief of Baghdad." How did you manage it?

A. We have got an arrangement with the United Artists. For instance, Mary Pickford, Charlie Chaplin, John Barrymore and others are all box

office value to us. I have an arrangement with them to take all their productions, because they are all of box value to us. That is not called block booking.

*Q.* On what terms do you get those, have you any objection to tell us?

*A.* I shall tell you in camera.

*Q.* I should like to compare it with the cost?

*A.* There is no comparison. I think there is no film which can be comparable to "The Thief of Bagdad." It is of the highest standard, and I don't think that for a very very long time to come any other Indian picture will be able to come up to that standard. It was a picture just suitable for the Indian market and we could loop up to it as of box office value, because the Star also was known to every one.

*Q.* I take it that your box office value depends partly upon the Stars taking part in a film?

*A.* Yes, and we also know that the Star appearing in that picture is not going to risk his or her reputation, and we know what kind of picture it will be when a well-known Star appears in it.

*Q.* Of the so many films that you have produced here, which of them is more successful?

*A.* "Ramayan," "Jayadeh," are successful from the box office point of view. Also "Pati Bhakti."

*Q.* Where did you find greater success with it?

*A.* That was successful everywhere, even in Bombay.

*Q.* Did you show it in the Punjab?

*A.* Yes, and it met with a great amount of success.

*Q.* And the composition of the audience made no difference to the receipts, because in the Punjab you have a larger percentage of Muhammadans?

*A.* In spite of that, "Pati Bhakti" went very well all over India. It is still in circulation. Even to-day if we were to put it up, we can earn a good deal out of it. Now, it is somewhere in an up-country station, because it is being circulated.

*Chairman:* Do you think that Bombay pictures do well in Bengal?

*A.* No, they don't, and Bengal pictures won't appeal to Bombay, because the story depicted in the pictures made in Bengal is suitable for this province. It is not on account of its photographic value or acting that it does not appeal to other provinces, but because the story is typically suitable for this province.

*Q.* But your experience is that Bombay pictures go better in other provinces than Bengal pictures do?

*A.* If the subject-matter is mythological, then even Bengal would take Bombay pictures, no matter where they are produced. "Pati Bhakti" was a social drama, and that was an exceptional case. But as I said, where a picture is based on mythology or religion, wherever produced, it will appeal to the Indian audience.

*Mr. Coatsman:* In reply to Colonel Crawford you said that the proportion of the income derived from your European audiences bears a fair proportion to the whole of your receipts. Did I understand you to say that the receipts from Europeans form the larger part of your receipts?

*A.* Where our theatres are located in European localities, our income is naturally greater from European audiences, and we generally rely on them.

*Q.* Would it be possible for you to tell us approximately what proportion to the whole of your receipts you get from the theatre situated in European localities?

*A.* It means a lot of working out.

*Chairman:* Would it be a fair percentage?

*A.* It would be a big percentage

*Mr. Coatman:* I take it that normally if you want to get any super films there will be some delay in getting them here.

A. As I explained previously, we have been pretty well up to the mark, and we are not far behind America or Great Britain so far as showing supers are concerned.

Q. Take one of the latest sensations in the film world in England, "*Chang*"?

A. It is coming here in February. It is being shown in England now.

*Mr. Coatman:* The Indian audience have no complaints?

A. As far as my organisation is concerned, I don't think they can complain. But I cannot vouch for foreign producing agencies here.

Q. Have you any knowledge of the way in which the Japanese industry was financed?

A. No.

*Chairman:* I asked him that.

*Mr. Coatman:* You have no knowledge. No trade papers from which we could extract that information?

A. No.

*Chairman:* The Japanese Consul has written to-day that he is addressing his Government.

A. Of course, as far as Japan is concerned, there you have one language, one nation.

*Mr. Coatman:* I think you said you have never shown a Japanese picture here?

A. No, but we let our theatre to a Chinese firm and they had a Chinese film.

Q. Have you ever seen a Japanese film?

A. No, but I have seen a Chinese film.

Q. Is the Chinese film as good as the Indian?

A. It is of a very poor quality. They have their own stories which would not go on this side.

Q. Well, have you ever been approached by any Japanese producer?

A. No, Sir.

Q. And, of course, you cannot say what sort of pictures they produce?

A. No. But they are only shown in Japan. I have not heard of their being shown outside.

Q. Have you heard whether the Japanese or Chinese are showing their films in places like Shanghai and Singapore?

A. I have no information.

Q. Have you ever tried to show pictures there?

A. I will say something *in camera*.

Q. And at Mombasa too, if you can. Now turning for a moment to the subject of posters, have you got to take the posters sent to you from America?

A. Yes. These posters are universally shown.

Q. I take it you have got to pay for them?

A. Yes.

Q. Must you take them?

A. Without posters we cannot do a large business. You must have some publicity, in the same way as we advertise in the papers.

Q. The point I wanted to get at is this. This sort of colour printing is a most excellent industry to have in any country. Would it be possible to have your posters done in India?

A. If there is a firm that can supply posters.

Q. You would be employing Indian craftsmen, printers and others.

A. It could not come up to that finish. The standard here is a very poor one.

Q. I have seen some very good posters done here.

A. Perhaps they were small size ones.

Q. Some of the best printing I have seen has been done by Indians.

A. And then it would be more expensive. It would be much cheaper to import them than to have them done here.

*Chairman*: They print them by the million.

A. And then again, Sir, there is another point. The producers would be afraid, in case we made our own posters in this way, that due justice would not be done to their pictures. They would be afraid that the picture would be ruined by poor publicity.

*Mr. Coatsman*: Now, I was very interested in the printed matter which accompanied your note. I see that you produced films of our King-Emperor's visit. Did you send those to England or America?

A. Yes, we did.

Q. And they were taken?

A. Yes.

Q. Can you remember if you made a good thing out of it?

A. We had a certain working arrangement whereby they brought out two producers and we took the positive and they had the negative.

Q. It was not your own men?

A. No.

Q. Do you now send any topicals abroad?

A. Yes, regularly. Regularly in the sense that when we come across any function which we think is good from the foreign market point of view, we ship it over.

Q. Why didn't you film the Legislative Assembly opening last January—the opening of the Indian Legislature?

A. It might have been a case where the camera man may have been busy.

Q. Because that is a great historical occasion. As a matter of fact, I happen to know that any film of that kind would have been snapped up in England and America.

A. But we are concentrating our minds on this. In fact, whenever we send out our camera man for scenes abroad or scenes relative to any picture we may be producing, he takes scenes of topical interest which in his opinion may be marketable abroad.

Q. It seems to me that this production of topical films is one of the best approaches to the foreign market that you could have, and it is also paying.

A. It is paying, but the thing is this. If we take 500 feet and send it abroad, they don't take the whole length. They just cut out a portion. Even then it is paying, because we show the pictures here as well.

Q. Now in your answer to question I you say "We own and control 65 cinemas in India". What is the exact significance of that word "control"?

A. That is to say, there are a certain number freehold and a certain number leasehold. A certain number which we own outright and a certain number on lease.

Q. But they are your own? They are not run by another?

A. Yes, they are ours.

Q. And you also work in association with 20 theatres?

A. There are 20 theatres who take the pictures regularly from us. We have no written contract with them except in certain cases which I have enumerated and they are perfectly satisfied with our service. They have nothing to complain about.

*Chairman*: It is open to them to exhibit any picture they like?

A. Yes.

Q. Can they take from others?

A. If they choose.

Mr. Coatman: In your answer to 5 (a), you talk about the studio which you contemplate. On what scale will you build that studio?

A. On modern lines. I will just show you what purchases I have made and so on.

Chairman: I suppose you want to know what will be the rough cost of the studio?

Mr. Coatman: Yes.

A. Here is a list of what I have already purchased from Hollywood. This will give you an idea of the very latest type of camera imported from Hollywood. This correspondence will show you the negotiations we are engaged in. (Hands in list.)

Mr. Coatman: I see. It is going to be equipped on modern lines?

A. The whole thing equipped will cost about a lakh and a half. That is excluding, of course, the cost of land. About £10,000.

Q. What organisation will you have?

A. The same organisation could do it, as part of our business.

Q. And you said you would have provincial experts?

A. Yes.

Q. Well, we have dealt with the comparative cost of producing films by Government agency and by private firms.

A. Yes.

Q. Now, in your reply to question 16 you say—and you repeated it—"the talent will have to be imported from abroad." Well, now, this importing of talent from abroad and this building of an up-to-date studio on such a scale with proper apparatus and so on, do you take that to be the job of the trade?—to import talent and build a studio?

A. I think it is necessary at the outset to try and get proper talent.

Q. What I mean is, do you think that much could be done by private enterprise, not by the Government?

A. Absolutely.

Q. What are your objections to Government agency?

A. It will restrict enterprise and initiative.

Chairman: It is not everyone who can import foreign experts.

A. But still, if people have got the business foresight, I don't see any reason why they should not.

Mr. Coatman: Now about these one or two instances you gave of pictures which were shown in different provinces but in one particular province had to be taken off. How many? "The Moon of Israel"—I think there was objection to that in Delhi.

A. The objection was very vague. There were no grounds for it.

Q. I take it that is a comparatively rare experience?

A. Very rare.

Q. Was that the only experience?

A. There was another experience of "The Life of Buddha" in Burma.

Q. Those are the only two instances?

A. Yes.

Q. This was on religious grounds. In your experience have you noticed any difference in the susceptibilities of audiences in different parts of India? For example, that the Punjabi Muhammadans are more susceptible to or more likely to raise objection on religious grounds to films than the Muhammadans of Bombay?

A. The main question is the type of pictures we are concerned with. It is not as if there is anything objectionable in it.

Q. "The Moon of Israel" I take it was shown in Bombay?

A. In every part of India and there was no objection whatsoever. It may be a case of a few rowdies who just took up the question.

Q. What form did the objection take?

A. I could not tell you exactly. It was very vague. Considering the fact that it was shown all over India and was well received for three years and just objected to in Delhi, it might have been due to a few rowdies.

Mr. Neogy: First of all, I want to get your meaning with regard to the point as to whether the private producer would find it possible or profitable to undertake the manufacture of films for Government, in view of the fact that he can make much greater profit out of entertainment films. It has been suggested that the rate of profit that you make out of entertainment films may be taken to be 20 per cent. May I take it the rate of profit varies in different cases?

A. Yes.

Q. And how long does it take you to recover the cost of an entertainment film and make a profit on it?

A. In the case of an entertainment film it takes time to realise that money, but if we had Government work, even if we made 10 per cent. profit on outlay, we would get the money at once.

Q. And there is some sort of uncertainty too about entertainment films. You say the cost is no criterion as to the ultimate success.

A. Yes.

Q. Then again, is it your experience that Government patronage of this kind gives a sort of advertisement to your concern?

A. Sure, it gives an advertisement and at the same time an impetus to the industry.

Q. And would it lead to any greater confidence in the financial market?

A. It would.

Q. And from that point of view it would enable you to attract more of Indian capital?

A. It would.

Q. Which is apt to be shy?

A. That is true.

Q. So although you may be making a little less profit on Government work, there are all these advantages to be taken into consideration?

A. Quite.

Q. Now then, with regard to the question of Indian capital, I don't know whether the reason why Indian capital has been shy, particularly with reference to this industry, is the absence of an assured future for the industry?

A. Yes.

Q. Don't you think that if Government were to make a definite declaration of their interest in this industry and to adopt a policy of protection for it, Indian capital would flow in more readily?

A. I think it would be forthcoming.

Q. And if the industry is to be protected, the protection must be mainly in the interest of Indians?

A. Quite.

Q. And for that reason, I take it, you consider it essential that only Indian capital should be allowed to participate in a scheme of production under such protection?

A. Yes.

**Q.** Now, about the definition of Indian capital. You know this term has come in for definition in connection with other industries. Would you be satisfied with whatever definition may be adopted by the legislature with reference to any other industry which is to be protected or with reference to any definite policy of protection that may be put forward. Take, for instance, the Indian Mercantile Marine Committee's recommendation,—the committee with which our chairman was associated.

**A.** That is perfectly all right.

**Q.** You must have seen that recommendation—but whatever that recommendation may have been, you would be willing to adopt it?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** So you are not going to trouble yourself about the details of it.

**A.** No, I would not.

**Chairman:** But you have not told us if you want any protection or what sort of protection you want.

**Mr. Neogy:** Well, we will take up that point next. What measure of protection do you think is needed to give an impetus to this industry on the production side?

**A.** As I say, the capital should be Indian.

**Q.** No, no. I mean the measure of encouragement needed from Government?

**A.** Oh, I see, what you mean. What I mean is that Government and public bodies should come forward and help the producer in the way of allowing him to take scenes, railways, soldiers, and so on.

**Q.** That is all?

**A.** That would help the producer in getting what he wants. At present if he wants to shoot any scene in a public building, he is not allowed to.

**Q.** And then you say something about reduction of import duty on certain materials?

**A.** On raw stuff.

**Q.** Now coming to the question of the quota. Are you aware of the exact details of the British system? Have you looked up the British Bill?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** You know it is not as if the quota is to take effect from to-morrow. They give a year's time to the trade before the quota takes effect. One year from the date of the passing of the Act, more or less. Supposing we were to adopt a quota of 5 per cent. with effect from 1929.

**A.** Well, we have not yet come up to such a standard as to warrant a quota being established in this country. After we have made our products and we can stand on our own legs that would be justified. If we introduce the quota right now, the result would be that producers would come out and produce quantitative pictures and not qualitative pictures.

**Q.** But you are one of the producers yourself. So far as you are concerned, you can find a good proportion of the quota.

**A.** There is another aspect of the statement. We have our European patronage to depend on in any theatres which are located in European quarters. You have got to count on their support too.

**Q.** How long do you think it would take you to set up your studio?

**A.** I think in a year's time.

**Q.** And after that you hope to produce films of superior quality?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Well, don't you think that pictures of that quality might have a greater chance of success with European audience than the present?

**A.** Not in the near future. In time to come, they may.

**Q.** Not even to the extent of 5 per cent.?

A. Our European patrons might be interested in topical scenes. They will be interested in topical subjects or subjects of educational value, but we could not expect them to be entertained by our present Indian social subjects or subjects dealing in Indian mythology.

Q. Quite right. It would be left to your choice as to which subjects you would show in any particular theatre. How much footage would 5 per cent. represent in an evening's performance?

A. As far as Indian pictures are concerned, we don't mind showing Indian pictures in theatres located in that quarter, but to ask us to force our European patrons to see pictures which they would not like to see and which would not interest them sufficiently, I think would be too much.

Q. I was asking you what footage would this amount to. What is the total average you show to audiences of an evening?

A. 10,000 feet. Five per cent. of that would be 500 feet.

Q. You wouldn't have even that?

A. The whole question is this. That if you are to show just a topical picture, how many topical pictures could you produce?

Q. That depends on you.

Chairman: He means there are not pictures enough of interest.

Mr. Neogy: You have produced certain Indian comics. I remember two, which were considered great successes. Don't you think they would appeal to the European audiences?

A. I think it is still premature to talk about a quota of Indian pictures right at present. But in the near future, once the industry is established it will be all right. It is still in its infancy and it will be some time before we are up to the grade to warrant any quota being established.

Q. How long do you think it will take?

A. Well, it is a very difficult question to answer. I guess we must wait and see results.

Q. Very well. I won't trouble you on this point because your position is quite definite. Now, about the piracy of films about which you have complained, I could not quite understand your position. You say, you have acquired exclusive rights of films from certain producers of America and duplicate copies have been secured by other exhibitors. Now, it is the producer that is at fault?

A. No, the whole question is this. These pirated and stolen prints are imported through various channels. It may be that a show-room copy has got out of the hands of responsible people or a second-hand print may be imported from Boston or anywhere else.

Q. Not from the producers themselves?

A. No, the producers would not supply them. The second-hand print may be just pirated.

Q. What do you mean by second-hand print?

A. What I mean is the production shown by small exhibitors in the United States and elsewhere—they take it and run in on a certain lease. That picture has a certain period, is allowed, say, 3 years or 5 years, as the case may be, and after the period of expiry of the lease, the exhibitor furnishes an affidavit to show that the particular copy has been destroyed, when as a matter of fact it may not be,—otherwise the pirated copies could not come over here.

Chairman: Yes, it is a case of evasion of the law.

A. Or they can dupe it. They can take a print, a new positive print and dupe another print out of it and ship it across.

Mr. Neogy: Now, you said that you had tried to secure the foreign market for certain Indian films and you mentioned two particularly.

A. Yes.



**Q.** And you mentioned also certain countries in Europe where you sold them.

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Did you try the British market?

**A.** Yes, the pictures were sent over but they were not approved. It was about a year ago. Of course, naturally the pictures were not up to the mark.

**Q.** But even then, certain continental countries did care for them?

**Chairman:** But when you sent them, you thought they might appeal?

**A.** No, I didn't think that at all. I sent them over to see if there was any chance, if they might interest them.

**Mr. Neogy:** What were the subjects?

**A.** "Pampered Youth" and "The Life of Buddha."

**Chairman:** They hadn't a market in England?

**A.** No.

**Mr. Neogy:** One of the things that you say in reply to question No. 17 is that till the standard of pictures is improved in India, no capitalist would like to invest his money in this venture. So quality depends upon capital, and capital depends on quality. That is rather arguing in a circle, isn't it?

**A.** *Ipsa facto.*

**Q.** That does not help us very much. One of the complaints that have been made before us is that you don't generally exhibit in good theatres—Indian pictures produced by the other producers.

**Chairman:** I asked the question and he gave the answer.

**A.** I have furnished you with a list of the Indian pictures shown.

**Mr. Neogy:** And I find that you have shown.

**A.** What you mean is that we don't show Indian pictures in European quarters?

**Q.** No, in the good theatres in Indian quarters. I take it that you consider the Crown and the Empress to be the best theatres from the point of view of the Indian audience and I find it is only "Shankaracharya" you have shown in these two theatres and all the rest you have shown in the other places—the Imperial, Alfred, and so on. Why is this so?

**A.** Well, the main trouble is this—we are attempting to show these pictures in the Indian theatres and we are making a test of it.

**Q.** But why not in the first class Indian theatres?

**A.** We are showing it in our Indian quarters. But we have got our own Indian productions too to show.

**Q.** That is to say, you don't generally show the other people's production in the better class theatres?

**A.** We do. These are all the different producers' films.

**Q.** But with the exception of "Shankaracharya" you have not shown any outside production in any of the two first-rate theatres.

**A.** Here in the Imperial and Alfred and Crown we have been showing them. In the Albion as well.

**Q.** The Crown and the Empress would be considered to be superior from the point of view of the Indian audience. Their complaint is that though you show their pictures here, you generally choose the inferior theatres belonging to you for their exhibition.

**A.** The position is this. I will just explain to you. Now, you take a picture produced in Bombay. Well, that type of picture, in our opinion, if we could show that in the Imperial we consider that is the right place for that type of picture. Now we could not show a picture that might be suitable for Bengalis to Muhammadans and Marwaris. We have got to suit the theatres of the locality.

**Q.** And you generally show the Bombay pictures in the non-Bengali locality. That is your position?

A. Quite. We show it in the theatres where we consider it will be appreciated.

Q. Now in the list that you have furnished us of 60 productions of your own, I find you have included "Savitri." But that was certainly produced in Europe.

A. That was produced in Europe but my brother was directing there. "Savitri" was produced in India also before by another company: that was very crude. But this was produced in Rome.

Q. Is there any other instance like this in your list?

A. No, the rest were all produced here.

Chairman: May I know whether you tried "Savitri" in England?

A. Well, our agreement with the Unione—with whom we produced it was definite, that we would have the rights for India, Burma and Ceylon and they would show it elsewhere.

Q. You don't know whether they did?

A. They have shown it on the continent. When I was in Rome, I was told that it had been shown on the continent.

Q. What about England?

A. I don't know.

Mr. Neogy: Have you any definite programme of production—that you want to produce so many features in a year?

A. We do produce a certain number.

Q. What is the usual number?

A. About 6 a year.

Q. Have you a permanent staff of actors?

A. A very small permanent staff and we take outside talent whenever we need them.

Q. You employ people on the piece system?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you think this would encourage the establishment of a regular film acting profession?

A. If you wish to have a staff on which you can rely you have got to train them up.

Q. In so far as you do not employ a large proportion of actors regularly...

A. That minimises the expense.

Q. But that does not help in the establishment of a regular film acting profession in the country.

A. But till such time as you can come up to that standard, it is no use going on to an unnecessary expenditure. When you have improved your standard and you feel you are working on sound business lines, then it will be feasible.

Q. Coming to the censorship question you have asked for the representation of the trade on the Board of Censors?

A. Yes.

Q. And the reply is that you have got the right to make representations to the Board if you have any grievance. Why is it exactly that you want representation on the Board itself?

A. What I meant was this. If we had a representative selected by the trade exclusively, who would be on the Board on behalf of the trade, it would mean the Board of Censors and the trade co-operating to a certain extent, knowing each other's views and being in a position to place facts before them. I think it would be beneficial.

Q. And for that purpose would you advocate the constitution of an elective body in which the producers, the exhibitors and the distributors should be included, that is, an association?

4. After all, the producers have got to come to the exhibitors. It is chiefly the exhibitors who are interested in this more than the producers.

*Chairman:* Would you like to have an elective body composed of those people?

A. Yes.

Q. Something like an electoral college for this purpose.

*Mr. Neogy:* It would have the right of electing one member on the Board. Do you think it would be difficult for you to get in all the men interested in the different branches of this industry?

A. If you take the chief concerns, the concerns that we think should be taken into consultation.

Q. Why should not all the people interested in the trade come into the electoral college? Why do you object to smaller people also having a vote?

A. We must have a suitable representative to represent the cause of the trade. I think what you say would be in order.

Q. You would not exclude anybody from the membership of that association. It is a purely electoral college for a particular purpose.

A. Yes.

*Mr. Green:* You would admit on the same terms as yourself, a gentleman owning one camera?

*Chairman:* One man one vote.

A. You can say, a producing company.

*Mr. Neogy:* The details can be threshed out. One theatre one vote, one producing concern one vote, or something of that sort. I do not know whether your attention has been drawn to a letter which has appeared in the "Forward" lately from an ex-member of the Bengal Board of Censors, Mr. Mitra, who was a representative of the Corporation on the Board of Censors. This is what he says: "Indian members have very little voice in the Committee since the European members predominate on the Board. Even a little Rathjatra festival scene has been banned in spite of my strong protest. The Sikh procession was also banned in spite of my protest. This is how Indian view points were given consideration on the Board where only 2 are Indians and 6 are Europeans." I am not asking for your opinion about the constitution of the Board, but do you know anything about these two cases?

A. I know about the Sikh procession being banned, and as regards the other, owing to the tension prevailing in the city at that time we were asked not to show the Rathjatra festival.

Q. Then the Rathjatra was not actually banned but you were asked not show it?

A. Yes, but the other picture was banned.

Q. Was it in 1925 during the Hindu-Moslem riot days?

A. Yes.

Q. Was there any tension at the place where this picture was taken? Was there any tension between the communities which might have been reflected in that picture?

A. No.

Q. Was there anything in the Hindu religious procession itself which when shown on the screen, which might lead to a tension of feeling?

A. There was not that element.

Q. What was the exact objection taken?

A. Owing to the tension prevailing in the city at the time it was best not to show it in Calcutta.

Q. Did any European member of the audience in any of your theatres at any time take exception to any picture on the ground that it misrepresented western life?

A. No, never.

Q. Not to your knowledge?

A. It has never been the case.

Q. Are there variety shows in any of your theatres?

A. Sometimes.

Q. You have got the license for it?

A. Yes.

Q. There is nothing to prevent you from having variety shows, ballet dances, along with the pictures?

A. No.

Q. A witness of considerable experience, who was also connected with you at one time, stated that under the existing system about 80 per cent. of the pictures that you get from America have to be "duds," that is to say, you have no choice in regard to the mater and that quite a large number of pictures have to be put on the shelf. Do you agree with that view?

A. I do not agree with this view as far as my organisation is concerned. I select all the pictures before I get them out.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* I think there is very little left for me to ask and Mr. Madan also is tired. I suppose, you are pleased with the appointment of this Committee?

A. Certainly.

Q. What do you expect from the Committee?

A. We expect surely that the industry is going to be benefitted by the appointment of you gentlemen, and I know for certain that whatever you will do will be best for the industry.

*Chairman:* Sir Haroon wants to know what is it you expect from this Committee.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* To break you up?

A. That is for you, gentlemen, to say. All I say is this, if a business concern has progressed through its own business enterprise.....

Q. That has nothing to do with this.

*Chairman:* None of us will be so foolish as to do that.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* You are the greatest dealer here in this trade and I should like to know, what is it you expect from this Committee?

A. All that we want is to try and improve this industry and bring it on a sound footing.

Q. Was it superfluous for the Government to appoint this Committee?

A. I think it is quite necessary. It is for the good of the industry.

Q. What do you expect now from us?

A. We expect lots of things—the abolition of the amusement tax. That is a burden on the industry. The reduction of duty on raw material and accessories.....

Q. Do you want this Committee to help the single theatre owner?

*Chairman:* The petty exhibitor?

A. The remedy lies with the exhibitor himself. I do not see how the Committee could help him.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* If a person starts a theatre, if he does well, you would probably like to swallow him as you did in Poona or Kirkee?

A. I have explained to you the whole situation about Poona. If an exhibitor is unable to run his theatre or if he thinks that he is benefitted by giving his theatre to my organisation, I see no reason why we should not take it up if we can make it a paying concern. We did not approach them.

Q. From 1920 to 1927 you have increased your theatres by leasing them from the other theatre owners?

A. Yes, naturally. There is still room for great improvement. If they approach us.

Q. They were doing well and still they approached you?

A. If they were doing well I do not know why they should approach us.

Q. Or probably you would be paying them a handsome price?

A. The exhibitor was benefitted in that way. It is to our mutual advantage.

Q. You have put down two theatres at Poona. You have said in your written statement that there are two theatres in the Poona cantonment area.

A. There is the West End Cinema in the cantonment area.

Q. In your written statement you have said two.

A. I remember it, West End and the Empire.

Q. Are you quite sure of your own property?

A. I am sorry there was a mistake. There are not two, but one in the Cantonment area.

Q. Is there any other cinema in the cantonment?

A. No.

Q. Why is there not?

A. That is for the cantonment authorities to say.

Q. You do not want any other cinema to be started there?

A. If we consider there is room for it, we would.

Q. Or is it due to your having paid a handsome price to the Poona Cantonment Board not to give permission to any other person?

A. I do not think the Poona cantonment authorities would stoop to that.

Q. Is there any condition in the lease that the cantonment authorities should not lease their land to any other person to start a cinema theatre there?

A. No, nor would the cantonment authorities accept such a proposition.

Q. Have you got the lease with you?

A. We have just taken over the lease from the previous lessees.

Chairman: Is there such a condition in the lease that the cantonment authorities should not license any other person?

A. We have not bound them down.

Sir Haroon Jaffer: In other municipalities or cantonments have you done any such thing?

A. No.

Q. There are facilities for catering for British troops, you have said here. As regards the Indian troops there are no facilities?

A. We get very few Indian troops to begin with.

Q. Supposing the Government of India or the Army Headquarters give you a contract to show films to Indian troops in the whole of India I suppose you will take it up?

A. Yes.

Q. And produce Indian films to suit Indian troops?

A. Yes.

Q. And that will help the industry?

A. Surely.

Q. And you are prepared to do that at competitive rates?

A. Yes, surely.

Q. How many cinemas have you in Calcutta now, about 10?

A. Yes.

Q. How many persons are employed in one cinema?

A. About 30 to 40.

Q. And in these ten theatres you employ about 400 men?

A. Yes.

Q. Have you got a mixture of all nationalities in your organisation?

A. Yes.

Q. We were told that Parsis predominate.

A. I do not think so. I can show you from my records that that is incorrect. That is a malicious statement.

Q. You have already got a lighting apparatus?

A. Yes.

Q. As it is do you think it will be possible for you to have a film from that lighting apparatus and show it to us in Delhi?

A. Unless and until you have an up-to-date studio you cannot. You must have a studio for that purpose. We must have a proper studio.

Q. Then why did you order it?

A. We are going ahead on this work. We have just brought it out.

Q. Your studio is to come after a year?

A. Within a year. Without this studio we cannot produce pictures in the true sense of the word that can be marketable abroad, or that can come up to the standard of foreign pictures. It is a physical impossibility.

Q. You have told us about captions in vernacular on western films. On how many films have you done so?

A. I think about half a dozen.

Q. Don't you think it will pay to have more captions in vernacular?

A. We just select pictures which we think would appeal to the people. If we put captions on the ordinary western dramas that would not have any effect and it would mean unnecessary expense on our part.

Q. How do you meet the difficulty of language in different provinces, say, Bombay, Madras, the Punjab, Bengal?

A. The copy we release for Bengal has Bengali title and Hindi title. In Bombay we have Guzerati. They insist on Guzerati titles in Bombay.

Q. Do you think that if you have them in those 3 or 4 languages, the difficulty will be got over?

A. You will have to make separate prints to suit each province. You will have to have captions to suit different provinces.

Q. There are 10 provinces.

A. We just take the important centres which we think is worth our while.

Q. How many Indian films of other companies have you shown in your circuit last month?

A. We have shown "Shankracharya" at the Crown, and it is being renewed again. (Reads other names also.)

Q. The charge that is made against you is that you do not show them in your circuit.

A. That is not true as will be proved from the list submitted.

Q. How many films have you hired during the last month to theatres other than your own and associated ones?

A. Just a few. Not regularly.

Q. You give them after you show them in your circuit and the associated theatres?

A. If we can spare a copy. It all depends upon the release dates.

Q. Those you get from America and other places you buy?

A. Yes, or we get them on a lease for 3 or 5 years.

Q. You find it to your advantage to buy?

A. Naturally having a big circuit it is businesslike to buy it.

*Q.* Those who build new theatres—either they will have to buy or go without the films?

*A.* There are other renting agencies and we rent ourselves too.

*Q.* Is it possible for them to compete with you in renting those films from America and other places?

*A.* The producers would not rent them but would sell them.

*Chairman:* What you have an exclusive right to, they cannot buy?

*A.* The subjects of which we hold exclusive rights they cannot buy.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* So the new theatre builder has to go without a good picture.

*A.* No, not necessarily.

*Q.* He is not encouraged to build a new theatre at all.

*A.* Why not? He can get as many good pictures as he wants. Even after our purchase you can get quite a good number of good pictures. There are several producing companies.

*Mr. Green:* You cannot buy all the pictures?

*A.* It is impossible. No concern in the world can do it.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* As regards the mythological and historical films that you have mentioned in answer to question No. 6 (b)—I have seen your list here. Out of the 50 or 60 pictures there are only three films which are interesting to Muhammadans?

### **Oral Evidence (continued) of Mr. J. J. MADAN, on Tuesday, the 20th December 1927.**

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* I believe, Mr. Madan, you have heard something about Sir Chimanlal Setalvad's concern. It is to be incorporated with a British combine.

*A.* I know something about it. I was in London at the time and I had some conversation with Mr. Ralph Pugh, the Managing Director of this concern. I happened to ask him as to what the scheme was and so forth and how Sir Chimanlal was interested in it. He made me understand that Sir Chimanlal was just advising him on the conditions prevailing here. That is the information I had.

*Chairman:* But was it a new company?

*A.* They were trying to float a concern there. They are opening out studios in the old Wembley Exhibition place.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* The whole concern is British?

*A.* Yes, British.

*Q.* Any mixture of Indians?

*A.* None whatever, a purely British concern; they were trying to float the concern at the time, they were negotiating to buy the plot of ground when I was there—just negotiations. I do not know what has come out of it since.

*Chairman:* What is Himansu Rai interested in. Is he interested in it?

*A.* I don't think so.

*Q.* Because I see from the papers he has come down two or three days ago. Do you know anything about that?

*A.* I don't know. This seems quite a different affair.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* Such combines, if they are started in India, are likely to work sooner towards the protection and development of the industry? If there were more big firms like yours in India, I suppose you would go on at a greater pace to produce Indian films and help the Indian Industry?

*A.* We are doing our best at present.

*Q.* You would do still better, if there was competition against you?

A. We intend taking better pictures ourselves.

*Chairman:* You don't follow him at all. His question is if such a combine or company comes here and does work, would it not induce better production?

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* Sooner?

*Chairman:* If such companies come out and if there are people who can compete with you?

A. In any case we are doing what we think best.

Q. The point is this. He says supposing a company like that.....

A. Whether such a company comes or not we are going to take better pictures. We intend taking better pictures and producing them in the right way.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* Isn't it better to have companies like yours to compete with you. It would put greater life into you.

A. It will be an incentive you mean? Yes, in a way.

*Chairman:* You find exhibition more paying than production and so you don't interest yourself very much in production?

A. We are interested in production as well as in exhibition.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* You say you are the pioneer of this industry and you are looked upon as such by Indians here?

A. Sure.

Q. You won't do such a thing as will harm the susceptibilities or go against the opinion of Indians.

A. For the past so many years we have been in this business I don't think we have ever injured anybody's feelings or anybody has had cause to complain against us.

Q. You won't sell your company to anybody else without the advice or the opinion of Indians or without safeguarding the interest of Indians?

A. When I was abroad there was some talk of American as well as British houses buying up our circuit. Well, it meant a great deal of publicity for my firm and it enhanced the prestige and popularity of my firm. We did not arrive at any conclusion; and naturally anything they suggest would be submitted to the Board and then of course we would have to take the consent of the shareholders as well.

Q. They made you an offer?

A. They did.

Q. And I suppose you replied to that offer, that you won't accept it?

A. Yes.

Q. You made your conditions?

A. Certainly. Subject to the wishes of the shareholders and the Board.

Q. In answer to some replies you made to Col. Crawford I gathered that you think there should be more Indians and Indian capital—you advocate that?

A. Yes, I advocate that.

Q. And if you do such a deal in future you will see that such conditions are adhered to.

A. I would not advocate it if I did not mean it. It is all, of course, subject to the shareholders' consent.

Q. Am I correct in thinking that you will see to such conditions being enforced in any future deal?

A. It must go through the shareholders.

Q. If the shareholders agree to have no such conditions, you will sell out still?

A. Any offer we get goes to the Board of Directors in the course of business. If the Board of Directors reject it, all well and good. Should they approve it, then the shareholders' consent has to be taken.



*Chairman:* It is a pure matter of business.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* You will sell out even if Indians do not like it?

A. The majority of our shareholders are Indians.

*Chairman:* Even they would like to have money, if you get a good offer.

A. That is the shareholders' lookout.

Q. It is the country's lookout. The country will have to put a stop to it.

A. I advocate that. I would not have advocated that if I were not in favour of that myself.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* Can you produce raw films here?

A. No, it is much cheaper to import.

Q. Have you tried to make them here?

A. It is impossible.

Q. Why should you depend for your raw films on other countries?

A. That is the case with every other country in the world.

Q. Have you attempted to make your own raw films.

A. No, it won't pay us.

Q. Will you try and see.

A. No, because I know it won't pay.

Q. Can they be made here.

A. It will be very costly.

*Chairman:* Have you got the materials?

A. Nothing.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* You have got directors, camera men and all that with you. How many have gone to Western countries for their education?

A. None of them. They were all educated here.

Q. You advocate that it is better to send camera men and directors and producers for training abroad?

A. They should not be sent abroad. The only way of training our lads here is to import talent. That is the best way. They would not get a look in in the other studios. Take the American studios for instance; they would not train a boy going from here. They will say "what concern is it of ours".

Q. Is it due to trade jealousy?

A. Well, it hampers them, it hinders them from their legitimate work. They have huge establishments, thousands of dollars are spent every day and they are not going to waste their time on others.

Q. Do you advocate because it is so expensive, sending men out from your company by giving them scholarships for the purpose.

A. I have looked at the conditions prevailing abroad and I have come to the conclusion that the best way is not to send our men abroad but to import talent here.

Q. You have got 60 cinemas with 40 men in each—about 2,400 people. Well, would it not be worth your while to have a small school of your own or import someone from America to teach them.

A. We brought out some camera men a few years ago from abroad just to teach our boys and then we sent them away. We were then in the initial stages and things have changed since then, so we are going ahead.

Q. You will improve when your studio is absolutely fitted up.

A. But we shall have to get in talent here and that is the best course.

Q. Now as regards your Indian historical, social and mythological subjects which you have mentioned, do you think there will be any harm in India to produce Indian battles like Panipat? Or something like that?

A. As long as you don't hurt anybody's racial feelings, I don't see why not.

Q. You will have to take precaution?

A. Yes.

Q. Will these subjects be good ones, will they be appreciated by the public?

A. Well, naturally they ought to be appreciated if they were produced on a sufficiently elaborate scale.

Q. Yesterday I think you said out of 60 films you had only four subjects which would appeal to Mussalmans.

A. Yes, "Turki Hur", "Nur Jehan", "Kashmir Sundari", "Leila Majnun"—these will generally appeal to all classes of people.

Q. Don't you think that stories from Arabian Nights will appeal to people here?

A. I mentioned to you the other day that we have just produced "Alladin", and we intend producing some more.

Mr. Green: Has your Alladin film been shown yet?

A. Not yet; it is in the course of editing.

Chairman: I hear that a Bombay Film producer has produced a similar film and that it has met with great success there?

A. But we have also produced our own. There is another one produced by the Fox Film Corporation, and that is the one we are showing now.

Sir Haroon Jaffer: If you and the Fox Film Company had combined and produced one, you would probably have produced a better picture, is it not?

A. I don't think so.

Q. If you produce a better picture, the Bombay people will naturally lose, won't they?

A. The theory of the survival of the fittest will come into play here. There are many subjects here which will appeal to Muhammiadans as well. As I told you, we have already produced five, and we intend to produce some more.

Q. You said that Government should co-operate with Indian producers. Did you ever approach Government for any help and did they refuse it?

A. We were told that they would not give us the use of any soldiers for film production.

Q. Have you got anything in writing to that effect?

A. No.

Chairman: When was this?

A. Some years ago.

Sir Haroon Jaffer: If you will ask now for some such help, Government will probably give it to you?

A. We do not know that. Therefore, we say that we should have all these facilities from Government and other Public Departments.

Q. If a film is stopped by the censors for some reason or other, who suffers the loss?

A. If the exhibitor is protected by an agreement with the producer that in the event of their film being rejected by a censor, it will be replaced by another of equal merit, they replace it.

Chairman: Only if he is protected by an agreement?

A. But then there is another trouble. We select the picture and we know that it has a box office value, and so even if there is a clause in the agreement that they will replace it by another of equal merit, they may consider it of equal merit, but we may not from our point of view. In that case we would be losers. The exhibitor will then be a loser to a certain

extent. Take the case of "Variety". I don't think the producers can replace it, because even supposing we had a clause that they should replace it by another of equal merit, I don't think they would have another picture of equal merit to replace it.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* We were told that the producer refuses to replace such a picture?

A. It is true in some cases, but if there is a written clause you will be protected; but if there is no written clause, then the exhibitor has naturally to suffer. Another point is this. If a film is banned by the censors, even if you have a clause regarding replacement by say an inferior product, then there is the expense of sending that film to and fro, and it costs a good deal.

Q. So you think it is better to keep silent instead of asking them to replace it?

A. If you can get something, that would be better than having nothing. There will be the expense of sending it across and bringing out another here.

Q. There is a complaint, Mr. Madan, that your rates are very high?

A. No, sir. We are charging Rs. 3-8-0 for cushion seats, and we are giving them sofas. If I were to remove those seats and put in tip-up chairs, I could get more accommodation. But I am not doing that, because I want to give better comfort to my patrons. Other people do not provide the same class of comforts to their patrons. Take for instance the organ that I am going to get; that alone will cost me Rs. 65,000. We are improving our standard of exhibition, and nobody else has thought of doing that.

*Chairman:* But you are not going to use the organ in the outlying stations?

A. No.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* You said something about film piracy. I am told that South America and France smuggle indecent films into India. Have you any knowledge about it?

A. It has not come to my knowledge.

Q. Probably such smuggling may be taking place, but you do not know about it, am I right?

A. We know nothing about it.

Q. Is it true that rejected films are re-imported into this country under different titles?

A. Not to my knowledge. I have not come across any case of that kind.

Q. Have you come across any case of smuggling by bookpost or parcel post from western countries?

A. That is a fact, and that is what I mean by film piracy. Such things are liable to come through any source. What I want protection for is films for which an exhibitor has paid a heavy royalty for its exclusive rights. We don't want that in such a case, another showman should be allowed to bring in a second-hand or a pirated print for just a few hundred dollars, because that will be detrimental to the whole trade.

Q. The post office and Customs people have no studio where the films can be examined properly?

A. It would be a very expensive job.

Q. When the Government undertakes these duties, don't you think they ought to provide such a thing?

A. No, that would be unnecessary, and it would be very costly.

Q. Never mind about the cost. Then you mean they should allow such films to come in?

A. Certainly not.

Q. How will you stop such films coming in?

A. They cannot be exhibited before any audience, because they will not be passed by the censors in the first place.

Q. They may be useful for private circulation?

A. If you come across any such case, certainly put a stop to it, and get the people concerned punished. But I won't advocate the establishment of a separate show room, because it will be very costly.

Q. Would it not be advisable to censor these films by the customs officials and the Censoring Board together?

A. There will be the question as to where you would have the films censored, there is the trouble of location of the office.

Q. Suppose we decide upon Bombay or Calcutta. Could not the films be examined by the customs authorities and the Censoring Board together, and won't it be better?

A. I believe in Bombay an official of the Customs Department is on the Board. I believe Mr. Green is a member of the Censoring Board there. It would certainly be a good thing to have a customs representative on the Board.

Q. You will be able to finish the inspection in one stroke instead of examining twice?

A. The chief question is one of expense.

Q. Don't be anxious about expenditure. We want to know whether such an arrangement would be good or not?

A. It would not only be a source of inconvenience to the trade, but it would also be a very expensive arrangement.

Q. Now, in Cantonments I have seen your handbills, and I believe you print them only in English and not in the vernacular?

A. We print both in English and in vernacular.

Q. I have very seldom seen vernacular handbills?

A. They are printed in vernacular too.

Q. Where do you print the handbills in vernacular? We are told that you care more for the European public?

A. Yes, in cantonments we issue more handbills in English to attract British soldiers and the European public, and a smaller number of handbills in the vernacular.

*Chairman:* I suppose Indian troops do not attend the cinemas?

A. Very few.

Q. Because you don't sufficiently advertise?

A. Not on that account. A few handbills are issued.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* We were told that such is not the case?

A. It is not a correct statement.

Q. When you sell your films to your associated theatres, do they select the films themselves or do they ask you to send the pictures to them or do you compel them to take some?

A. First of all, we show the pictures in our theatres here, and they from experience find that the pictures that we show here must be good ones, otherwise we would not show them here. They also read all the journals and newspapers, and they see what amount of popularity our films enjoy here and then they order out a particular picture that they like.

Q. But we are told that you impose your Block booking system on them?

A. The term "block booking" applies when a producer binds down an exhibitor to take a certain number of films in order that the exhibitor may secure two or three pictures that he may want. But that is not the case with us. There is also the time limit. We have no agreement; we have no binding with the exhibitors in association with us. If we had any such agreement with anybody, then the term block booking could have been applied.

*Q.* You take 75 or 80 per cent. of the takings of your productions, while other producers only take about 50 per cent. Why is this large difference?

*A.* We give our pictures on hire for say Rs. 150 or even Rs. 50. We have given our pictures even for Rs. 500. For a big Super they must pay more, and if they are going to make more money from a big Super, I see no reason why they should not pay us a little more for it. We have produced "Durgesh Nandini". We have given even 36 per cent. to the producers for their films, and we also spend for publicity and other items. In these circumstances, I don't think the exhibitors should have any cause to complain.

*Mr. Neogy:* Less percentage means more money to them?

*A.* If they can improve the receipts by working with us and if they get even 36 per cent., it means more money to them.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* If a film is a good one, I suppose you put up your prices for tickets, is that so?

*A.* We charge only 40 per cent. for Indian pictures from other theatres.

*Q.* When you put up your rates for tickets, do you give the exhibitors anything out of your additional profit?

*A.* We don't interfere with the exhibitors at all in this matter.

*Q.* If the usual price of tickets is Rs. 3-8-0 and if you increase it to Rs. 7, where does the surplus money go to?

*A.* That is never done. That will go in the percentage if such a thing is at all done.

*Chairman:* Sometimes the ticket prices are put up on account of the popularity of the films, are they not?

*A.* I don't think so. We never put up our ticket prices on any occasion.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* Have you come across any case in which all the tickets are purchased by a contractor?

*A.* We don't do it at all; but we cannot say anything of others.

*Q.* I want to know your experience?

*A.* I can't speak for others.

*Q.* We are told that the distributors send films to the exhibitors up-country without previewing them and at times the exhibitors are being cheated. Do you know about it?

*A.* We don't do anything of that kind.

*Q.* Then you think others might be doing it?

*A.* I could not speak for others. But I may say that there are distributing agencies here which do give their entire product to certain showmen.

*Q.* I mean the exhibitors want a particular picture, and the distributors send them an entirely different picture or a bad picture?

*A.* If the exhibitors express a desire that they want to see a certain picture before ordering it out, all the facilities for previewing are extended to them if they care to avail themselves of such facilities.

*Q.* You say that a representative of your firm goes abroad from time to time. I suppose you yourself go?

*A.* Yes, we do it in turn. I go once in two or three years. Besides that, we are continuously in touch with our agents also.

*Q.* Now, who pays this amusement tax?

*A.* It falls on the public.

*Q.* You are not suffering in any way by that?

*A.* We are also suffering in a way, because if the amusement tax were not there, our receipts would have been greater.

*Q.* We were told by the Commissioner of Police that the cinema audiences are increasing?

*A.* As I told you, the number of cinemas have increased, because the theatres are creating a new taste.

*Q.* That does not show that the tax has affected the public?

*Chairman:* You have not established the fact that in consequence of the amusement tax the attendance has diminished. You say the number of theatres has increased, but we are told that the attendance in old theatres is also increasing?

*A.* It may be chiefly in the 2nd and 3rd class seats that you find the attendance better.

*Q.* Anyway, you have not given us figures to show that the amusement tax has affected the attendance in theatres?

*A.* I shall be only too glad to furnish you with any figures you may want.

*Q.* I mean, if you complain of the amusement tax as a burden, you will have to satisfy us with figures that it is so?

*A.* The very fact that after four years we have been able to pay a dividend of only 2½ per cent. ought to be enough.

*Q.* Other people are making good profits. I mean some of the exhibitors are making good profits?

*A.* I don't know.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* You say there is an increase in attendance in the 3rd and 4th class seats?

*A.* Yes, there is a slight increase. The amusement tax is a burden on all, and there is no doubt about it; it is not a burden on the 3rd and 4th class seats which are generally occupied by the poor class people, because this tax does not apply to those seats. I am talking of the rupee seats and upwards.

*Q.* Suppose the amusement tax is not abolished, would you advocate that no tax should be imposed on the 3rd and 4th class seats?

*A.* It should not be levied at all, as it affects the people generally.

*Q.* I believe all this value of films goes to America? Where are they taxed, are they taxed here or in America?

*A.* I could not tell you that.

*Q.* Would you like a reel tax to be put on to meet the expenses of the Central Board?

*A.* As it is, the industry is burdened too much. If you do that, you will be putting a further burden on the industry.

*Q.* Suppose the duty on imported films is increased from 15 to 30 per cent. What will happen? Won't it help the industry?

*A.* I don't think so. To begin with, the industry is already burdened. I fail to see how it is going to help the indigenous industry, because we have a certain class of people who will insist on seeing western films, and we have to cater for them as well. If we don't show them western films, then they will begin to patronise some other form of amusement, with the result that the cinema industry will not receive sufficient encouragement from the people of this country.

*Q.* Do you think that America will retaliate in any way if we increase the duty on raw films?

*A.* We have nothing to do with that point. My point is, if we force our European patrons to see Indian pictures, we will lose their patronage and they will take to other forms of amusement which will be to the detriment of the cinema industry.

*Q.* I would like to know if there is any chance of America retaliating?

*Chairman:* Supposing we increase the duty on foreign imports, will the country which will be affected by it retaliate by putting on an excise duty?

*A.* They may or may not retaliate. It is not only they who will be affected, but we will also be affected; ultimately the exhibitors also will be affected, because we will not get adequate patronage. We won't get the audience, and they will go to some other form of amusement.

*Q.* Do you think the exhibitors will combine and show old films and that they won't import more films from America owing to the duty?

*A.* It would be harmful to the trade in general.

*Q.* Do you pay the same duty on used up films as on new films?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Do you think that it should be continued or the duty should be reduced on used films?

*A.* In view of the fact that we pay no duty on Royalty for the first print, I think it would not be fair to ask for a reduction in the same rate of duty for old films. We pay now Rs. 37-8-0 for first print, and we don't consider it fair to reduce for the second print in consideration of the fact that we pay no duty on Royalty for the first print.

*Q.* Do you get any concession rates in duty for importing news reels just as the press is receiving concessions from the Telegraph Department?

*A.* Yes. We will welcome such reduction for educational films too.

*Q.* When these films are returned to America, do you get any rebate?

*A.* We generally destroy old films and furnish the producers with an affidavit that the film has been destroyed. Other people may be returning their used up films to America, but we don't send them. I am informed that the Universal people are returning to America old films. I don't think that anybody should get any rebate, for this reason that they have shown the picture for two years, and have taken the full benefit, and I see no reason why they should demand a rebate.

*Q.* If there is a rule that they should demand a rebate within three years, then you won't mind it?

*A.* I don't think they would be justified in demanding it.

*Mr. Green:* There is a limitation to the statutory provision, that if the goods are not worth the duty paid, they cannot demand any rebate. If a film is shown for three years, will it be worth any rebate?

*A.* I don't think so.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* It is said that educational films have no box office value. Suppose you are asked to show educational films, will you charge anything to Government for it?

*A.* Certainly not. We are prepared to show them free. When I say "from a box office point of view," what I mean is this, that if we advertise that we will be showing an educational film, we will not draw the crowds to see it. There is one point, as we are on this question of films. We are sending negatives of our Indian films abroad and getting prints made there and shipped to India. We have been doing that. Well, don't you think there should be preference shown in the way of customs tariff to Indian pictures imported in this manner. Because after all it is an Indian picture. If you want to promote the Indian industry, don't you think the customs tariff for such Indian pictures should be reduced?

*Chairman:* You get all the positives printed there?

*A.* We get those prints back. The negatives remain there. Then, since we are trying to improve the indigenous production, don't you think there should be some preference shown to Indian imported pictures.

*Mr. Green:* I believe Government have under consideration a proposal to reduce the tariff valuation of such articles.

*A.* Yes, Sir. But I am bringing it to the notice of the members.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* As regards your reply to No. 18, what help do you require from Government yourself?

*Chairman:* I thought we put that question yesterday and he answered it.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* For yourself. Do you require any loans—any free lands in places where there are no theatres?

*Chairman:* He told us yesterday he merely wanted certain facilities, nothing else.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* No cheap land?

*Mr. Green:* He will take anything he can get.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* Are there any local agencies for British films here?

A. No.

*Chairman:* What does it matter to us?

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* In order to assist the British films industry.

*Chairman:* That is the trade's look out.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* Well, if we are to recommend that there should be a quota of British films, then such a recommendation would be useful to the Government.

*Chairman:* Not to the Government. It would be merely advice to the trade.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* Or to the committee to recommend such things. I am told some of the best products in England have been sold to foreign countries at a very big price.

A. There have been very few British pictures sold. "Neil Gwynn" was one of the films sold in the United States.

Q. If they get more money they won't give to the empire, they will sell to the foreign countries.

A. Will you please clear this point, Sir.

*Chairman:* What he says is that the British producer, if he gets a good price from America, he will sell it to him. He won't agree to retain it.

A. For exhibition in the States, Sir? For his territory? Well, naturally he must.

*Mr. Green:* It is a territorial thing.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* Do you know of any films which showed Indians in shady colours?

A. No, Sir, not to our knowledge.

Q. Do you know of the films: "The Great Circus Mystery", "Samson of the Circus", "The Hope Diamond Mystery" and so on. Mr. Chunilal Munim gave us these names in Bombay.

A. I could not tell you offhand.

*Chairman:* You have not seen any films either here or in England where the Indian character is ridiculed.

A. No, Sir, not to my knowledge. You mean Indian, not Red Indian?

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* You charge half price for children?

A. Yes.

Q. Suppose we don't want the children to see a film and increase the price to full, very few children will come?

A. That is the look-out of the parents. No parents would like to show anything that may be harmful to their children.

*Chairman:* Quite true. But what he says is would it not be to your advantage, supposing there were no children's rates at all.

A. There is one question. Why should we deprive them of it. Supposing the film is innocent from the point of view of the parent of the children concerned.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* But would it affect you very much? Your children's audience is very small.

A. About 15 per cent. of children and adolescents.

Q. But the number of mere children is very small?

A. Of course, but not when a special children's programme is concerned.

Q. That is all right. But ordinary performances. It is a very small percentage? Do you ever give children's performances?



A. Yes, we do. We have our Fun Friday. Every Friday we give an all-conic programme for children. We used to call them Fun Fridays, they were specially meant for children.

Q. Do you advertise it as such?

A. We advertise it as Fun Friday.

Q. Wouldn't it be a good thing if you did?

A. If we advertise Fun Friday, everybody knows that that programme is meant for children.

Q. Do you advocate the censoring of the stories and scenarios before being produced?

A. No, Sir, that is not possible. Many changes are made even at the time of production. The Director puts in his own ideas.

Q. The Censor's Board have no theatres of their own?

A. No. They don't need them. It would mean unnecessary expenditure on their part if they built a show-room of their own and had a machine and staff and so on, when the trade is always willing to show the films at their place.

Q. It would save trouble to the members of the board if it remains in their office.

A. No, it wouldn't. It would mean a lot of unnecessary expenditure and I don't see how it would save trouble. It does not take them any longer to come to our show rooms than it would take them to go to their own.

Q. Isn't it true that the whole film is not censored at times?

A. Absolutely, every time.

Q. And there is an opportunity of tucking on an indecent portion to the last part of the film?

A. No, Sir.

Q. Such a thing has not been in your experience?

A. No, Sir. But there has been one such case, of a picture, an Indian picture being censored, where a bit was inadvertently left in. That was in the second print. It was in the negative, the negative was, unfortunately, not clipped.

Mr. Green: Was any action taken?

A. There was a lot of correspondence in the matter and there was a case. A court case.

Sir Haroon Jaffer: That is what you call tampering with the film after circulation. But taking on has not been done?

A. No, except for this one sad case, which was very unfortunate. We failed to correct the negative.

Q. Do you purchase any films from Indian states—films produced in Indian states—Hyderabad for instance?

A. No, Sir.

Q. Are they shown in British India?

Mr. Ncoy: Some are produced in Kolhapur.

Sir Haroon Jaffer: Anywhere in the Indian states?

A. You mean produced in the Indian states and shown here?

Q. Yes. They are censored here, I suppose?

A. They are all censored.

Q. I think the people have it censored either in Bombay or somewhere.

Mr. Green: They are censored in British India.

A. Yes.

Sir Haroon Jaffer: Is it not a charge that if the censor cuts off a portion of a film, the poster shows the very part, I mean some portion of it?

A. No, Sir, that has not been the case. It is not correct.

Q. Do the press make comments about your films?

A. Yes, they do.

Q. Good or bad or always good?

A. If it is bad they say so.

Chairman: Have they ever said so?

A. Oh yes. I have read reviews myself that such and such a picture story was far-fetched.

Q. You mean the theatre or the cinema?

A. The cinema reviews.

Q. We shall be glad if you could give instances.

A. Well, I have read these. I have not made records.

Sir Haroon Jaffer: Which newspapers?

A. English newspapers—I think the "Statesman".

Q. In which your advertisements appear?

A. Sure.

Q. You say in the last question 45—you say that the film producing agencies should not be registered and licensed.

A. We talked that over yesterday.

Q. Are your operators licensed in the theatres?

A. Yes.

Chairman: I suppose every producing studio must undergo some sort of inspection for the fire brigade and electric lights and so on. The inspection will have to come in and under the Factories Act perhaps.

Now there is one thing I should like to know. I have got an idea, whether it is right or not you will be able to tell me. These passionate love-making scenes that appear in cinema dramas, when they appear at all, and these social dramas are not popular with the Indian masses?

A. Well, the educated Indian likes them.

Q. I know, the educated Indian and European cares for it. But the illiterate class does not care for that sort of thing? That is what I wanted to know.

A. No, the illiterate class does not care for social dramas.

Q. Supposing we withdrew such dramas from exhibition, what clientele would you lose?

A. I cannot answer that question unless I explain. Any objectionable part that may be there is looked after by the censor.

Q. I quite see that. But supposing we withdrew all love and passionate acting now. What class of audiences would suffer?

A. Every class of audience. There would be no entertainment. There must be romance in the story.

Q. I mean the class you would lose would be the educated Indian and the European and Anglo-Indian.

A. They comprise about 75 per cent. of my audience in European theatres now, in the high class theatres.

Q. It has been suggested that one means of eliminating objectionable films will be by introducing the Indian film, making it more popular, and more intensely exhibited. It has been suggested in some places that one method of dealing with these objectionable films will be to make Indian films more popular: produce more and show them more.

A. The main thing is that our Indian stories, with the exception of a few, would not appeal to the Europeans and Anglo-Indians, and we would lose their patronage, with the result that they would take to some other form of entertainment.

Q. That is what I had in my mind yesterday when Col. Crawford questioned you. The class of people you would lose would be the European and Anglo-Indian and the educated Indian, if you remove these passionate love-making scenes.

*Col. Crawford:* May I ask a question? Are you quite convinced that your European audiences do like romance pushed to the extent of passion? I quite agree with you that romance must come into most western stories.

A. What I mean is that anything objectionable is attended to by the censorship.

Q. That is a point one wants to clear one's mind on. What is an objectionable and what is not an objectionable subject. Do you think that the ordinary person approves of a kiss that does not stop at the mouth but wanders all over the breast as shown in films?

A. Well, that is going to extremes. Then it is difficult to pass the censor. But as long as it is within bounds it is tolerable, it is perfectly all right.

Q. Ordinary love-making is all right, but to what extent must you show passion on the screen?

A. As long as it does not go to extremes.

Q. You think that passion should be represented?

A. To a certain extent. There is a moral lesson attached to it. When they illustrate passion they show the moral effect eventually.

Q. Well now, in the film "Variety" there was a lot made there of actual passion as against ordinary love. Do you think, if you cut out the actual passion, the European audiences would not like to see that film?

A. As long as it is tolerable, it is perfectly all right. It can be made tolerable. Of course, that is necessary. After making the necessary cuts, I think it is a perfectly good picture.

Q. There is one other question that Sir Haroon Jaffer asked, the question of pre-censoring. I do not suggest this as a handicap to the trade in any way. But in America before a producer produces the work and spends his money on the picture, I understand he voluntarily shows his scenario to William Hayes, who says, No, that story is not good enough. Now, would not some arrangement of this sort by voluntarily taking opinion be of some assistance to you and save a waste of money?

A. There is another point to be considered. Say you submit the story and the story is eliminated. But the whole thing is the treatment of the story contained in the scenario.

Q. Even of the actual pictures that you are going to take?

A. But the director puts in his touches now and again. His touches may make a film perfectly impossible or it may make it good.

Q. But you don't think some pre-censoring of scenarios would be of any value to you? You are quite convinced of that?

A. Yes. We are careful in selecting our themes.

Q. You know sufficiently what the censors want not to require pre-censoring?

A. Yes.

### **Supplementary Written Statement of Madan Theatres, Ltd., dated the 10th February 1928.**

We beg to acknowledge receipt of your letter No. 691, dated Madras, the 10th January 1928 enclosing copy of the supplementary statement submitted by Globe Theatre, Calcutta.

1. Referring to the First Para. of the supplementary statement, we do not quite follow what the Party is driving at. He is quite right when he says that BENHUR is the biggest production of the world, but it is clear to anyone that Producers cannot go on producing such big films right through the year, as it costs millions of dollars to produce pictures of such magnitude. Generally, only one or two such super productions are produced in one year. In order to keep our various Theatres supplied with films regularly we have to buy certain number of films. As explained in our written statement the

films secured are of our liking and according to our requirements and in consideration of some suppliers giving us their Giant Supers. We naturally give preference to their other films according to our requirements.

With regard to paragraph 2, our statement that there is no monopoly of any sort is neither "misleading" nor "fallacious" as can be verified by your Committee by a glance at our statement submitted to them showing the number of Cinemas working in opposition to our own in different centres from one to thirteen Theatres. As such, Film renters do have access to these Theatres other than our own.

2. *Key Theatres.*—There are no "Key Theatres" in India in the sense they are understood in the United States of America. This has been fully explained in our answer to the Committee questionnaire (please see page 9 of our statement).

If the Party means by "Key" Theatres those which are located in big cities like Calcutta, Rangoon, Colombo and Bombay from which a film renter can expect a comparatively bigger amount of hire than from small stations, even then, there is no lack of Theatres other than ours in all the above centres, where he can hire his films to advantage, and any Film Renter therefore has free access to exhibit his Supers in these big cities.

3. The contention that "Smaller Theatres" cannot afford to pay more than Rs. 100 per programme, is not quite correct, as for really good programme pictures, a Film Renter can realise from Rs. 75 to Rs. 300 or more per programme according to the population of the Station. Of course for Supers and Giant Supers, show men are found willing to pay comparatively more hire since by showing such good pictures they not only enhance their reputation but also get bigger returns.

The plea that an Importer cannot raise his cost of film without any place to show in the so-called Key Theatres, is not convincing as in addition to Globe Theatres Circuit the Universal Pictures Corporation admitted in their evidence before the Cinema Committee that they are supplying films and doing regular business with a circuit of 83 Theatres, which surely does not prove that they depend solely on the business done in what the Party calls the "Key Theatres".

4. We are glad that the Party admits of the existence of two other American Concerns in the field as pointed out by us. But as for "subtly" pushing out on one concern from the Bombay market, we are sure they are alluding to Messrs. Universal Pictures Corporation who, however have not been pushed out of the Bombay Market at all. The Universal People were supplying some of their films to West End Cinema, Bombay, which we subsequently took under our own management on certain working terms. We further made some arrangement with Universal to show their films at West End Cinema and we did show several of their pictures during the first eight months of 1927, when, the Proprietor of West End was forced to dismantle the Theatre building in accordance with the terms of his lease with the Landlord. Hence the exhibition of their films had to be suspended for two or three months. Thereafter Universals took on lease a certain Theatre in Bombay and since then they have been showing all their own pictures in this particular Theatre which is now being run under the name and style of Universal Picture House. The above facts will show that they have not been pushed out of the Bombay Market.

The Party remarks in the same para. that another American concern had a Theatre in Bombay which has also gone into the hands of a particular concern meaning thereby Madan Theatres Ltd. The allusion is evidently to Messrs. Pathe, Bombay. The Party is again wrong as Pathe are still supplying their films to Royal Opera House. Of course we have taken this Theatre, but since then as will be seen from the enclosed circular of Messrs. Pathe they have made arrangement with the Imperial Cinema Bombay where their films are being exhibited i.e., even before we have taken possession of the Royal Opera House. Further the Globe Theatres have newly acquired the "Capitol" Theatre in Bombay and pathe films are open to them for exhibition if they choose.

As already pointed out in our written statement there are 13 Theatres in Bombay working in opposition to us and if one Theatre goes out of the hands of a particular party there are a dozen more including Globe's Capitol left for other suppliers to exploit their films.

*Paragraph 4.*—Mr. Sidhwa also in his oral evidence at Rangoon amplifies this point by stating that “Madans” had practically the whole of the output of American films”. This is to say the least an absolutely absurd and ridiculous statement. Besides there are still the productions of Pathe and Universal and on the face of all this it is ridiculous to state that we have the whole of the out-put of American Films. No single firm can possibly corner the entire American Out-put, which ranges into millions of feet. Any number of first class films shown in the best Broadway Theatres in New York are still available for India, Burma and Ceylon. Leaving aside for arguments sake the American Out-put, what about the best pictures of other countries like France, Germany, Italy, etcetra, all of which are available and hence their statements alone cannot be accepted.

Perhaps it is not generally realised that the chief reason why some well-known producers prefer to give their best pictures to Madan Theatres Limited to Madan Theatres Limited is because we control a well organised circuit of Theatres all over India, Burma and Ceylon and hence the Producers know only too well that they are deriving the maximum benefit by showing their productions in our circuit.

One great benefit of controlling such large a circuit is that the best pictures of the world are available for the Indian masses at the prices of admission ranging from Rs. 3-8 to As. 2 per head, compared to \$3-30 to \$1-10 per seat in America or in other words from Rs. 9 to Rs. 3 per seat (Please see enclosed leaflet of the world's premiere showing of the latest Chaplin Comedy “The Circus”). Thus it will be seen that the people of India are enabled to see such big Supers as “The Circus” at one third the prices of admission paid in the United States of America.

6. In Paragraph 8, Sub-section (i) the Party makes it a grievance that the well-known and popular name of Metro was not allowed to be advertised by his Firm although they bought 15 Metros while almost in the same breath he contradicts himself in the first para. of his statement “that if a producing company produced one BENHUR he also makes a certain number of other films which are very indifferent in comparison”. The point is that Metro did not allow them to advertise their name apparently, because the party must have purchased some of their very old productions and presumably “duds” in comparison with the uniformly high standard of their latest out-put and naturally they insisted on the omission of their trademark in the advt. lest Metros reputation should suffer in the estimation of the public. Besides it passes our comprehension why this plea is urged when the Party himself made a contract with Metro for some of their “dud” picture subject to the above condition and surely the fault cannot be laid at our doors.

7. *Enemies of Women.*—Nor is it clear to us how we could be accused of interfering with the rights of any Party when we are as free as anybody else to negotiate for any film for which rights have expired and this is a very common practice which obtains in the film market in India as well as other countries in the world.

8. *Rangoon Theatre.*—We are sure our Rangoon Manager, Mr. D. A. Nariman, must have laid before your committee all the facts in connection with the leasing of the Theatre in question and we trust you have been fully convinced of the *bonâ fides* of our transaction.

9. *Re: Universal Pictures Corporation.*—We enclose a letter in original from Messrs. Universal Pictures Corporation, Calcutta, from which your Committee will observe that Globe had no regular contract with the Party in Calcutta in 1924 before we showed “Hunch-Back of Notre Dame” and we fail to understand why any showmen should not be at liberty to book any picture he wants when the Supplier is not bound down to any Party. As regards Rangoon also, the original enclosure from Universal shows that they

are supplying their films to another Party, *viz.* the Olympia Cinema after they ceased to supply to Majestic Cinema, which conclusively proves that the Universal have not been pushed out of the Rangoon market either.

10. *Regarding Pathé*.—The statements that we cornered the best pictures of Messrs. Pathé after Harold Lloyd's Safety Last is entirely wrong as we never cornered any Pathé Picture. But all that we did was to take a Few First National Pictures of which Pathé are the Agents. In fact we were showing Harold Lloyd Films before the Glabe existed in Calcutta.

11. The Globe Theatres Limited have insistently declared in season and out of season that they have shown 60 per cent. of British Pictures and profitted thereby. The enclosed British Productions bulletin from the Kinematograph Weekly of January 12th, 1928, contains no less than 118 British Productions, already released, to be released and to be produced, out of which we had secured only 19 Productions. Thus they have free access to secure the balance 99 British Productions but still we do not understand why they show so much unmitigated anxiety for securing American Films. Apart from America Films there are so many other good continental productions at their disposal.

On the other hand since the departure of your committee from Calcutta we have secured the following seven further latest British Productions in addition to the 12 already submitted to your Committee with our written statement:—(1) Flight Commander; (2) Carry On; (3) The Fake; (4) Further Adventures of Flag Lieutenant; (5) Lucky of the Navy; (6) Hope and Glory; (7) Tell England.

We are no blind advocate of any Producer; as we have to give the public what they want.

We do secure by all means productions of every country provided they are the best and up to the required standard.

12. In conclusion we wish to add one point regarding the location of Central Board of Film censors. If your Committee were to decide in favour of a single Central Board, we would earnestly appeal that the Central Board may be situated in Calcutta for the several reasons pointed out in our oral as well as written statement.

### **Further Supplementary Statement of Madan Theatres, Ltd., dated the 15th March 1928.**

#### *Regarding Central Board of Film Censors.*

With further reference to our written statement and Oral Evidence and also our supplementary Statement dated 10th February, 1928, we respectfully beg to point out below a few outstanding difficulties which we will have to face in case your Committee decide in favour of a Central Board of Film Censors being located in Bombay.

1. Out of the total number of films imported by us into Calcutta, about 90 per cent. are American received by steamer and the balance of 10 per cent. is made up of films from other sources received by post. If all these films are to be shipped to Bombay, it will necessitate our maintaining a separate Clearing Establishment in Bombay with all the entailing charges.

2. We shall have to keep special Fireproof Godowns for storage of films, which will cost a heavy sum.

3. Shipments of films at an enormous cost received every month and if these are to be imported into Bombay direct, each time a shipment is to be cleared, we shall have to remit very large sums atleast three or four days in advance to meet the heavy drafts, duty and other landing charges; thus resulting in loss of enormous sums in the shape of interest on such advance remittances.

4. We have already pointed out that Calcutta is the Film Distributing centre for our entire Circuit of nearly 100 Theatres in India, Burma and

Ceylon and our Distributing Department is manned by a staff of nearly forty hands of long time experience; and it will be very difficult to maintain an equally experienced Duplicate Establishment in Bombay.

5. The Head Office of our Firm being in Calcutta it is the practice of Directors of Madan Theatres Limited to preview all films with a view to classifying them according to their merits to facilitate distribution of films throughout the Circuit and as such all films have to be transported to Calcutta from Bombay after they have been censored at the latter place. This will cost a tremendous sum by way of freight, which is an unnecessarily heavy burden on the Company.

6. The proposal will result in our paying heavy insurance charges twice on all films in as much as they are insured once by our Foreign Agents when exported and again they have to be insured when they are sent to Calcutta from Bombay either by post or Railway as films being very costly property are always sent by us duly insured.

Some specific instances and figures have already been put before your Committee in our written statement in support of our arguments and we pray that your Committee will take a dispassionate view of the whole case and be pleased to decide in favour of the Central Board being located in Calcutta only.

**\*Oral Evidence of Miss RAINEY SMITH and Miss PATIENCE COOPER, Actresses, on Monday, the 19th December 1927.**

*Miss Cooper:* I have been connected for 9 years with the film industry even since this film production was started in Bengal.

*Chairman:* I suppose you have been acting only in Bengal?

A. Yes.

Q. Have you been to Bombay at all?

A. No.

Q. Miss Sitadevi, how long have you been connected with this?

*Miss Sitadevi:* For three years.

Q. Both of you like the job?

A. Yes.

Q. Both of you act on the stage?

A. No, only on the screen.

Q. Miss Cooper, I thought you appeared on the stage also?

*Miss Cooper:* Just for the shows of the Corinthian Theatre, not always.

Q. How many girls are there now in Bengal who appear on the film?

*Miss Cooper:* There are a number of girls now, but I do not know whether they are on the permanent list or not.

Q. How many girls take to it?

*Miss Cooper:* I think there are six others apart from Miss Sitadevi.

*Miss Sitadevi:* I do not know of any one.

Q. Do you think that Bengali girls are likely to take to this profession?

*Miss Cooper:* We have got some Bengali girls in this film acting. They come and go off and on.

Q. But they do come?

A. Yes.

Q. None of them are taken on a permanent employment?

A. I do not think so.

Q. Do you know of any who is in permanent employment by any studio?

A. No.

Q. I suppose you always work with Madans?

A. Yes.

*Miss Sitadevi*: No. The first picture I was in was "The Light of Asia". That was my first picture. Later on I came to Madans.

*Q.* You are now at Madan's.

*Miss Sitadevi*: Yes.

*Q.* There were other ladies in "The Light of Asia". Do you know them at all?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Was it also their first time?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Now as regards the conditions of the studio life in this province, are the conditions suitable for people like you going into the trade? Are you treated well by the male actors?

*A.* Oh, yes.

*Q.* They are strangers; are you treated well?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* You don't experience any trouble or nuisance?

*A.* No.

*Q.* Is that also your experience, Miss Cooper?

*Miss Cooper*: Yes.

*Q.* How do you acquaint yourself with Indian ways when you appear as Indian ladies on the stage?

*Miss Cooper*: I have studied their ways. I have been with them for so many years, and the directors guide us.

*Q.* And you move about with the people?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* I suppose you have nothing in particular to say about the lady actresses who appear on the films which you think this Committee should take note of? Is there anything you wish to bring to the notice of this Committee.

*A.* No.

*Q.* You think the conditions are all right and the conditions are likely to attract good people to the screen. That is what we are anxious to know.

*A.* Oh, yes.

*Q.* You joined this business after you left school.

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* You were in school before that?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Why did you take to this?

*Miss Sitadevi*: It is very interesting.

*Q.* Do you prefer Indian companies.

*A.* There is no chance of going abroad or of joining any European companies.

*Q.* I suppose if they employed you now you would like to go?

*A.* Oh, yes.

*Q.* At less remuneration or more?

*A.* More.

*Q.* Miss Cooper, you also came out of school and joined this business?

*Miss Cooper*: No, I first joined the stage after I left school--Bandman's Musical Comedy Company. I then left the Company and I was in Calcutta when Mr. Madan saw me dancing at some show and asked me to dance at his show. He told me he was starting a producing company and I stayed on with him.

*Q.* How much do you get now?

*A.* I would rather not say.



*Q.* Do you get good remuneration, can you say that?

*A.* No.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* You are pleased with it. You want more?

*A.* Yes.

*Chairman:* As you like this profession, would you like to continue in it?

*A.* Yes.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* You mix with Indian ladies also in this cinema company?

*A.* We do work with them.

*Q.* How do you find them, are they of respectable family?

*A.* Away from the studio I don't know them at all.

*Q.* You don't know their private life?

*A.* No.

*Q.* But when you meet them you think they come from respectable families.

*A.* Yes, they seem all right; they seem quite nice.

*Q.* I want to know about the respectability of their family. They behave all right in the studio?

*A.* They behave all right.

*Mr. Neogy:* Do you know Bengali?

*A.* No.

*Q.* When you have to interpret certain sentiments for the film you have to depend upon the directions given by the director?

*A.* Yes, he explains everything in English.

*Q.* You don't find it at all inconvenient to interpret those things?

*A.* No.

*Mr. Chaitman:* I would just like to know how you came, in the first place to take to the profession.

*Chairman:* She has told us already that she was on the stage.

*Q.* How old were you when you first began to act?

*Miss Sitaderi:* 13. In the Light of Asia.

*Q.* And how did you get into it, did you answer an advertisement?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* How were you chosen?

*A.* There were about 3,000 applicants. The Germans came out to produce "The Light of Asia" and they put in an advertisement.

*Mr. Neogy:* How many months did it take to produce that picture?

*A.* Six months.

*Chairman:* Can you tell us, of the 3,000 applicants, how many were Bengalis or Anglo-Indians?

*A.* I heard from the company that there were 3,000 applicants. I did not see them.

*Q.* Were you given an individual interview or did you appear with the others?

*A.* An individual interview. The Manager saw some of them every day.

*Q.* And who were the other people who applied? Were they all Anglo-Indians?

*A.* There were some English girls also.

*Mr. Green:* Indian girls too?

*A.* Mostly Anglo-Indians and Europeans.

*Mr. Chaitman:* Miss Cooper, is it your opinion that this profession of film actress will have to remain for the present at any rate in the hands of Anglo-Indian or European girls in India?

*Miss Cooper:* I don't know. The Indian girls do just as well even now.

*Q.* You have acted with Indian girls?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Were they educated girls?

*A.* I don't know. They seemed all right. I cannot say whether they were educated or not.

*Chairman:* She just sees them in the studio and does not know them outside.

*A.* Some of them belong to the stage, the Bengali theatre. They joined the theatre when they were very young.

*Col. Crawford:* Are you satisfied with the publicity you get, Miss Cooper?

*A.* No.

*Miss Sitadree:* I am quite satisfied.

*Q.* When you were selected did they select you by photography, did they take your photograph and see the result?

*A.* No.

### Written Statement of Profeser J. R. BANERJEA, Principal, Vidya-sagar College, Calcutta, dated the 22nd November 1927.

#### INTRODUCTORY.

1. As I have not been to Cinemas since 1920 and as I have been to them only three or four times in my life, many of my answers are based on what I have heard from others and in some cases they reveal knowledge which is not quite up-to-date.

No.

2. (a) Indians of educated classes frequent cinemas in far larger numbers than those of the illiterate classes. The attendance has to a slight extent increased so far as both classes are concerned. Place Calcutta.

(b) 2rd educated, 3rd illiterate class.

(c) Perhaps 4th, in some cases 3rd.

#### PART I

##### *Film Industry in India.*

3. Films relating to adventures popular with illiterate Indian audience and films relating to love matters and European customs and manners with educated Indian audience.

4. Yes.

5. I don't know.

6. (a) To certain sections of Indian audiences they would be more popular, but not to the majority.

(b) (1) All the above.

(2) Scenes depicting stories of heroism.

7. I don't know.

8. I am not interested in cinemas. But I must say that there is no reason not to be satisfied.

9. I don't know.

10. I cannot speak for India.

11. I do not know.

12. It is no handicap. Cinemas are so popular that the Tax does not stand in the way.

13. Not to any appreciable extent as cinemas are very popular and the exhibitors make much profit. I think. It is to a slight extent useful for promoting the indigenous production of films. The present Tariff rules should continue.

14. To a slight extent.

Not much.

15. Not yet.

Public opinion in this country is still against development of cinemas.

16. Their number is limited and therefore the country cannot depend on them for a substantial output.

As I am against cinemas, I would not suggest anything.

17. Very doubtful.

18. I think Government should not encourage any enterprise for film production.

19. I cannot say.

20. No.

21. Except that there should be a law allowing no production or exhibition of film that is not in accordance with moral standard (and punishing guilty persons) and therefore there should be film censors. I don't think the State should undertake any work in connection with films.

#### *Films of the British Commonwealth.*

22. It is doubtful if India by participating in such policy would assist the development of her own film industry, assist in making herself better known and improve the standard of Western films shown in India.

23. (a) To a very slight extent.

(b) Various Governments should put themselves in communication with one another and first ascertain whether co-operation is possible.

#### **PART II.**

##### *Social Aspects and Control.*

24. (a) Yes such as "Damaged Goods", "Queen of the Sea", "Nep-tune's Daughter", "Temple of Venus", etc., in which pictures of naked or almost naked females are exhibited or films based on stories of illicit love.

(b) Not the first but the second.

(c) Criminally suggestive or romantically adventurous films to boys and people uneducated.

(d) No.

(e) Cannot answer as I have no information.

25. Yes.

26. Certainly.

27. No.

(b) No.

28. Criminally suggestive or romantically adventurous films.

29. Yes.

30. Yes, certainly, otherwise they would be demoralised or might cherish criminal propensities. Age 14.

31. Yes, if the censorship represents Indian opinion adequately.

32. Indians should be more largely represented on the Censorship Board.

33. (a) No.

(b) Yes, but it cannot be helped.

(c) No.

44. (a) Yes, for larger and more correct views.  
 (2) Not necessary.  
 (3) Representatives from all the Provinces according to their trade importance in this industry.  
 (4) Calcutta.  
 (b) No.  
 (c) For that Legislation by the Legislative Assembly would be required.  
 (d) By contributions from different provinces.
35. (a) There should be more Indians on the Provincial Boards if they are to be retained.  
 (b) No.
36. (a) No, qualifications, artistic, educational, moral are essential.  
 (b) Yes.
37. (a) That is a matter of opinion.  
 (b) Yes, certainly.
38. No.
39. No.
40. Yes. They should be done by a local Board.  
 No as I take no interest in cinemas.
41. Yes, to some extent.
42. Representatives of Trade should be on the Board of Censors.
43. If the control that is at present exercised is thought to be strict, nothing further is required.
44. Very little.
45. (a) Yes, by passing an Act to punish adequately production and exhibition of immoral and criminally suggestive films.  
 (b) Certainly.

**Oral Evidence of Professor J. R. BANNERJEA, Principal, Vidyasagar College, Calcutta, on Tuesday, the 20th December 1927.**

*Chairman:* You do not go to the cinema much?

A. No. The last time I went to the cinemas was in 1920.

Q. So that what you can tell us will be only from hearsay?

A. Yes, from what I have heard.

Q. There is one point on which you could help us. I suppose you are in charge of students and you come in contact with them?

A. I am the Principal of the largest college in Bengal.

Q. Do you think that the cinema is having any evil influence on your students?

A. Undoubtedly, a demoralising influence so far as some of the films are concerned. I say this from what I have heard.

Q. I do not want what you have heard. As Principal you are in touch with students and that is why I want this information. Can you tell us from your observation whether it has any bad influence on your students?

A. So far as my observation goes, I used to be there—at the cinemas—in 1920 and in that connection I met some of the students at that time, and I can say in the case of some students certainly, it had a demoralising effect. But what has happened since then is entirely a matter of hearsay so far as I am concerned.

Q. Has any reprehensible conduct of any student come under your notice since that date?

A. Due to visiting cinemas? Not directly.

**Q.** Of course, I will value your opinion on what you yourself observed or what came under your notice as Principal of your college. I suppose you believe in the film assisting educational work in institutions?

**A.** If the films are of the proper type.

**Q.** And you have not got them now?

**A.** No.

**Q.** Would you advocate the production of films of that sort or importation of films of that sort?

**A.** That depends upon the type, what I consider to be of the proper educational type. For instance, films in connection with propaganda work for training people in sanitary subjects and things of that kind, certainly, they are good and there can be no objection to them.

**Q.** Science, astronomy.

**A.** So far as scientific teaching and astronomy are concerned, very little can be done.

**Q.** You think a better use may be made of the film for educational purposes generally?

**A.** Yes.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* You do not like the cinema? You hate it?

**A.** I hate the cinema.

**Q.** If a person of your type were on the Board you would ban every film?

**A.** That will depend on circumstances. The thing is this. If the film, for instance, be of an educational type only, educational type of the right sort, I would not ban it. But films of the type that we find now, those connected with women and other things—those I condemn.

*Chairman:* You have a similar objection to the stage also?

**A.** I never go to theatres.

**Q.** So that all these operas and other things you do not like?

**A.** No.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* Would you advocate people of your sort to be on the Board of Censors?

**A.** That is really asking whether I should like to be on the Board in a way. But I should think that would be helpful. That will be exactly what I should like in the circumstances. In that connection, though the question has not been put to me, I should like to say this. What I have heard is this—that a film may be passed in Bombay and condemned in Calcutta and *vice versa*. There should be some uniformity there and a central board of the type that is suggested is a desideratum and I would advocate that very strongly.

*Chairman:* Even then there may not be uniformity?

**A.** There might be to a greater extent than now.

**Written Statement of Maharajkumar SRISCHANDRA NANDY,  
M.L.C., Maharajkumar of Kasimbazar, dated the 13th November 1927.**

6. (a) Yes, provided they are well taken.

(b) (1) Romantic Western films and Indian social and religious films.

12. It is certainly unfair on the Cinema goers.

14. Yes. There is demand for such films.

16. I do not think there are very many of such people at the present moment, but more people will take it up if the Industry is put on proper footing. By bringing in experts from the West.

17. I should think so.

26. (a) Yes.

29. No.

31. Yes.

32. Yes.

33. (a) Yes.

(b) Likely.

(c) Yes.

34. (a) By no means.

(2) Likely.

(b) No.

45. (b) Yes.

**Oral Evidence of Maharajkumar SRISCHANDRA NANDY, M.L.C.,  
Maharajkumar of Kasimbazar, on Tuesday, the 20th December  
1927.**

*Chairman:* Do you go to the cinemas often?

A. Yes.

Q. In Calcutta?

A. Yes, generally in Calcutta.

Q. Your native place is Kasimbazar?

A. Yes.

Q. Have you got a cinema there?

A. No.

Q. What is the population of Kasimbazar?

A. The population of Berhampore Municipality, of which Kasimbazar is a ward, is about 26,500 according to the last census.

Q. And you have not got a cinema anywhere there?

A. No.

Q. Do travelling cinemas come there?

A. Occasionally.

Q. How often do they come?

A. Very seldom.

Q. When they come there are they popular?

A. Yes, but the difficulty is to get a place to show films there.

Q. You have no public hall there?

A. There is a public hall there which cannot be lent for a long period.

Q. How would you like a provision in the Municipal Act enabling Municipalities to spend money on building theatres useful for cinema purposes? Do you think it will be a popular measure?

A. I do not think, it would be wise if it be simply for cinemas.

Q. If it is for amusement purposes including cinemas?

A. If it be one of the items along with other useful purposes I would not mind.

Q. You believe in the cinema as a useful method of spreading knowledge and also giving amusement to people?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you think it has a good influence or bad influence on the public?

A. It would depend on the nature of the film.

Q. As it is now, what is your opinion about the effect of the cinema?

A. I think it is generally good.

Q. Do you think the censorship now practised is adequate?

A. I could not tell you.

Q. You have no reason to complain?

A. No.

Q. You have not seen any film to which you yourself would take exception on the ground that it is likely to injure the Indian public?

A. No.

Q. You have seen both western shows and Indian films?

A. Yes.

Q. Are Indian films very popular with Indians?

A. Yes, generally.

Q. Are they growing in popularity? Do you think some steps should be taken to encourage the growth of Indian films?

A. Yes.

Q. You think public money should be spent for that purpose?

A. Yes.

Q. It will be a useful expenditure?

A. Yes.

Q. And necessary expenditure?

A. Yes.

Q. People like you, of the zamindari class—do they frequent the cinemas much?

A. I think they do.

Q. I suppose they favour western shows more than Indian films?

A. Yes, up till now. It depends on the film. There are some Indian films which are liked by us.

Q. What sort of Indian films are liked by you?

A. Well, generally these social dramas, historical films.

Q. Indian?

A. Yes.

Q. Based on Bengali novels, like the one we saw the other day, "Durgesh-Nandini". I saw a huge crowd even yesterday.

A. Yes. And "Krishna Kanta's Will" too had a long run.

Q. Do people of your class patronise that?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you think that the Bengali community will go in for this industry of producing films?

A. They might if there are openings for it.

Q. You consider there are openings?

A. I should think there are.

Q. Then why should they not open more studios and go ahead?

A. The reason is possibly they have not got the funds.

Q. Or they have not got the organising capacity?

A. I think they have the organising capacity.

Q. Then why do they not get the funds?

A. I know of people who are very energetic in producing films when the money comes forth from somebody else. Bengalis have taken a good part in the producing of films in Bengal.

Q. In acting you mean?

A. Yes.

Q. But they do not find the finance?

A. Yes.

Q. Is it because of their poverty, or is it because.....

A. I should consider it is due partly to poverty and partly because they are not sure it will pay.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* In reply to question No. 6 you say, "Yes, provided they are well taken." What are the weak points of Indian films?

A. Up till now there have been great defects in the effect of light. Generally in Indian films you find that the light is not thrown properly on the face and the expression is not properly visible. Besides the titling, etc., are also not properly done.

Q. They are not written properly or the wording is not good?

A. The wording is not good, is not attractive. I cannot say all of them are not so, but it might be improved upon.

Q. What about actors and actresses here?

A. They are good but they require some training.

Q. You say in reply to question No. 16, "If the industry is put on a proper footing." In what way?

A. Firstly, finance, and secondly, establishing studios and getting good actors and actresses to come.

Q. Who should finance this?

A. I should think attempts should be made to raise funds from the public and Government also might help it partially.

Q. They say capital is shy.

A. It is shy because they are not sure it will pay.

Q. If the initiative is taken by Government, perhaps the capital will follow, that is what you mean?

A. There is every likelihood.

Q. As regards your answer to question No. 32 you say that the present system of censorship in the provinces is satisfactory.

A. I mean the censorship in Calcutta and in Bombay.

Q. Do you think there is room for any improvement?

A. I could not say.

Q. You want some element of elected people? More Indians?

A. I would like more Indians.

Q. And elected, not nominated?

A. Yes, I think elected would be better.

*Mr. Neogy:* Maharajkumar, not very long ago you were a student of the University?

A. Yes.

Q. And since then you have been connected with the management of a very large college endowed by your own family?

A. Yes.

Q. And in that way you are in touch with the student community?

A. Yes.

Q. From your experience are you in a position to support the statement which has just been made by the Principal of the Bidyasagar College that the cinema has a very baneful influence on the student community?

A. I do not think so. It will depend on the nature of the film. If it be a good film I should think it has a very good effect.

Q. What do you think is the general effect of the cinema as a whole?

A. As it is, I do not think it has a bad influence on the students.



*Colonel Crawford:* Are you quite satisfied with the standard of story that is being shown on the film?

A. Yes.

Q. You find nothing to object to at all?

A. No.

*Mr. Green:* You said you would like to have elected members on the Board of Censors. Now, in Bombay, the Bombay Government nominate one Hindu, one Muhammadan, and one Parsi out of a board of six. Supposing your election resulted in a return of three Hindus?

A. If that be the case there is no help for it.

Q. You would not mind that?

A. No.

Q. On the Board of Censors would it not be more useful to have the different communities represented so as to have the benefit of their advice?

A. Yes, but that will depend upon the ratio of population of the different communities.

Q. The Boards of Censors are censoring for the whole of India. Their certificates are valid throughout India, and one cannot consider the population of the place where they are sitting as a guide. I only want to know whether you would approve of elections supplemented by nomination to represent interests which may not be represented?

A. I should like to keep a majority for elected members.

### **Written Statement of Mr. N. C. GHOSE, Bar-at-Law, dated the 19th December 1927.**

#### *Introductory.*

1. No, except as a regular reader of articles in the newspapers and magazines concerning the Cinematograph Industry and films in general.

I am in the habit of preserving cuttings which interest me in the course of such studies.

#### *General.*

2. (a) (1) It is difficult to give a statistical estimate. Educated people of all grades in society visit the cinemas.

Take Indian Religious Films—Religious minded people and Indian ladies rush to see them.

It is on the increase.

(2) Illiterate people frequent the cinema largely as a recreation, considering the fact that there are no parks and sports open to them, and they are shut out from books, arts and healthy games.

It is daily increasing. It depends on the purse. They usually frequent the low priced seats. (Calcutta, Delhi, Benares, Darjeeling, Allahabad, Lucknow, Kurseong, Agra—places which I have visited and which possessed cinemas).

2. (b) All sorts and conditions of people from the artisan and domestic to the highly educated and cultured.

(c) It depends on the location of the Cinema and the character of the film.

Parents take their children to see comic films or such other films which may prove interesting.

#### **PART I.**

#### *Film Industry in India.*

3. Dramas, wild life, travel, fighting and other films depicting adventure appeal to Indian audiences.

Films on purely Indian subjects, mythological or religious, appeal to the orthodox section, especially woman-folk.

4. Yes. That is apparent from the crowded houses, especially on days when a good film is exhibited.

I know of cases where a purely Indian film was shown, and for some days it was not possible to get seats.

In Calcutta the films exhibited at the cinemas controlled by Madan Theatres Limited are satisfactory and up to the mark.

5. I cannot answer as it concerns the trade mainly.

(a) mostly they are.

(b) Yes. Some are exceedingly popular such as the film now being shown "Durgesh Nandini".

(c) Films dealing with purely Indian subjects are popular only with Indian audiences. Films dealing with travel or scenes in Indian states do appeal to European audiences also. But Western films appeal to all kinds of audiences. Durgesh Nandini, Krishna Kanto's Will, Sivaratri, Joydev, Krishna Janani, Patni Protap and other films whose titles I do not recollect.

6. (a) Yes. But there is a limit to "Satity" even. One would be fed up if one saw only purely Indian films.

(b) Religious and mythological films appeal to Indian audiences both educated and uneducated, as Indians are of a sentimental and religious temperament.

7. I cannot understand what special qualifications are possessed by troops that they should require special catering in the exhibition of films.

8. (a) No.

(b) Mainly finance and talent. Secondly, want of encouragement on the part of the Government. Thirdly Lack of imagination and sympathy on the part of the different boards of censors. Private initiative and enterprise and encouragement from the State.

9. For the trade to answer.

10. For the trade to answer. Even if there is the system of "block" and "blind" booking, the public have not suffered as they are well catered for.

11. For the trade to answer.

12. It hits the exhibitor in this way that middle-class people cannot go to the cinema as often as they would like, and so the income is affected. The reason is that middle-class Indians usually occupy the Re. 1 and Rs. 2 seats and do not like to sit with low-class people. It is rather hard for them to have to pay 2 as. tax on a Re. 1 ticket and 4 as. tax on a Rs. 2 ticket. Every auna hits the middle-class Indian.

13. If the Customs tariff on imported films is reduced, it is possible that the price of the seats in cinemas would also be reduced. An experiment might be tried by reducing the present customs tariff on unexposed films to help the indigenous production of films.

14. No. It would only increase the sale of imported unexposed films, as films are not manufactured in India. Yes, there is a demand. That is apparent from the papers how people flock to see the cinema shows given by Railway Administrations and Medical Health Boards.

15. Yes. India possesses all that is necessary for the production of entertaining films.

16. No. Well-equipped studios should be started and schools founded for teaching cinema-photography, senario-writing, directing and acting, and indigenous talent should be encouraged.

17. A matter for capitalists. If the industry receives substantial encouragement from the State, I see no reason why capitalists should fight shy of financing a growing industry like that of film-production.

18. Both legislative and administrative action can materially help private enterprise for film industry. For example the Government of Victoria (Australia) have legislated that for every 2,000 ft. of British films exhibited in Victoria, 1,000 ft. must be manufactured in Australia. Our Government can legislate on similar lines for the benefit of the industry. In England the Government have helped in film productions by placing the resources of the Navy, Army and Air Forces at the disposal of producers. Only recently the French Government have allowed Hugo Rumbold to use the palace and gardens at Versailles for the production of a film dealing with the life of "Marie Antoinette". Our Government can likewise extend similar advantages to the producers here.

19. More than I can say.

20. (a) No. Considering the other urgent vital needs of the country I consider it would be criminal waste of money to subsidise film companies. If, however, recognised medical or humanitarian societies wish to import films for the education of the masses in certain matters, e.g., health, child-welfare, maternity, etc., etc., a rebate in the customs duty may be allowed, both in the case of Library films and unexposed films.

(b) No, as I have not suggested any expenditure on the part of the State.

21. I do not endorse this proposal at all. There is no State Agency either in Europe or America to undertake the management of the Film Industry as a monopoly. The management of an industry on a monopoly basis by the State is opposed to political theory and all enlightened principles of State Management.

#### *Films of the British Commonwealth.*

22. I am against participation in the policy outlined in the resolution of the last Imperial Conference to give encouragement to British Empire films. Looking at the question, however, from the view point of master and servant, I am willing to concede some preference to films produced in Great Britain and Ireland by purely British actors and actresses. I do not have any soft corner in my heart for those parts of the British Empire which do not show good-will to India or Indians.

(a) No.

(b) No. India is already well-known as the purveyor of coolies for the whole world.

(c) No. The standard of western films shown in India is quite up to the mark. How would Imperial preference improve the standard of Western films?

23. (a) Cinema pictures of different parts of the British Empire may be shown to Indians, but whether they would be popular with the masses is a matter of doubt. In any event, the title headings would have to be rendered into the different vernaculars of the provinces where the pictures may be exhibited. Of course the pictures would convey the vastness and majesty of the British Empire, but there is a danger. The people might get discontented on learning of the prosperity of Canada, New Zealand, Australia, etc., and of the health and longevity of the peoples inhabiting those countries. As regards pictures of India, to be exhibited in the different parts of the British Empire, let them depict the best phases of Indian life.

#### **PART II.**

#### *Social Aspects and Control.*

24. (a) No. I ought to add that for several months past attempts have been made in newspapers to represent that Indians are being contaminated by Western films.

(b) No. How can there be, when films allowed to be seen in Britain and other countries are needlessly and arbitrarily banned in this country,

when films exhibited in Bombay are banned in Bengal, when films exhibited in Bombay and Bengal are banned in Delhi and other provinces?

(c) No class of film shown in India has had a harmful effect on the people.

(d) (1) Yes, more than adequate, more than stringent.

(2) Same answer as above.

(e) No.

(f) Does not arise.

25. No.

26. (a) No. The public is the best judge. If a film is of an offensive nature, people will not go see it and there will be an expression of disapproval in the press.

(b) No, except the film "The Moon or Israel", which after extensively exhibited all over India for 2 years was abruptly stopped at Delhi on account of the senseless conduct of a number of Mohamedan rowdies.

27. (a) No. On the contrary films exhibited in India always represent Westerners in a high light and that Western people are superior to the peoples of Asia and Africa. No. As the cinemas are mostly situated in big provincial towns and centres of industry, where people come in close contact with Western people, Western life is neither unintelligible nor misunderstood by the Indian masses.

(b) I have yet no knowledge of this fact.

28. (a) (b) No.

(1) (2) Does not arise.

29. Certainly not. What would be the legal definition of an "Adult"?

30. No. The parents are the best judges. No parent would knowingly allow or take his child to see a film which would have a bad effect on the child. Indian ladies are compelled to take their children—even babies,—to the cinemas, as they cannot leave them at home. What would be the position then? Is there any prohibition as regards children attending Theatres or Jattras or Nautches or other shows?

31. Yes, if it is exercised with judgment and discretion on the one hand, and sympathy and without any ulterior object on the other. I do not see the reason for censorship of a film in India which has already been certified by the Government of a civilised country as fit for exhibition. Artificial Imperial preference for second rate films in preference to first rate films produced in other countries is opposed to principles of Justice and Fair-play, and bound to hit the business in India very hard. The question ought to be taken into serious consideration that the fondness for Imperial production will eventually provoke reaction, and then India might suffer.

32. Certainly not. It is far from satisfactory. It is defective in this way that it is more or less guided by political motives and lack of sympathy, judgment, artistic temperament and breadth of views. The Bengal Board of Censors is not representative of the whole province. All the members do not possess the necessary qualifications. The necessary improvements might be effected by reconstituting the boards in the light of present experiences.

33. (a) (b) Yes.

(c) Most certainly yes. The Boards also receive sympathetic treatment.

43. (a) No. How can there be a strict control over the export of films which are of such a small size that they can be carried in the vest pockets of tourists and travellers?

(b) (c) Does not arise.

44. Public bodies should insist upon the production and exhibition of films of a high standard and which would convey some instruction and would convey some instruction or moral. The press should maintain a staff

of independent and impartial reviewers and not be guided by the opinions and descriptions supplied by the Cinema Trade.

45. (a) No. There is already a strict censorship over film production. No more control by the State is necessary in the very interests of the trade.

(b) Yes. This should entirely be a Municipal affair.

34. (a) Yes.

(1) As the present Provincial Boards have proved more or less incompetent. The powers exercised by the Provincial Boards have not been exercised with proper care and judgment.

(2) No. On the contrary it would be to the interest of the trade to have a Central Board instead of Local and Provincial Boards everywhere for various reasons. The cinema trade would be free from unreasonable—interference of the Police. In Calcutta the Commissioner of Police is the President of the Provincial Board. In the interests of law and order it is not desirable that such a high official should be saddled with these minor duties. His time should be better utilised in maintaining peace and protecting the lives and properties of citizens. In Bengal, one of the Deputy Commissioners of Police in Calcutta, acts as the Secretary of the Board. This official also should be relieved of these minor duties.

(3) That depends on the Government. In the constitution of the Central Board, men of culture, education, wide sympathy, and artistic temperament should have a place.

(4) It should be situated at a centre convenient to the trade.

(5) No. I would not advocate a Central Board in addition to the Provincial Boards. The Provincial Boards should be abolished altogether.

(c) Does not arise.

(d) From the high customs duty and the fees of censorship as imposed now.

35. (a) No.

(b) If there is a Central Board, there should be a wholetime officer as Censor, who would go about inspecting all films and pass them. He should be a man of wide culture, liberal, sympathetic, artistic disposition and well-travelled. If the Censor is doubtful as regards a certain film, he should refer it to the Central Board. If, however, it is decided to retain the Provincial Boards, the same remarks as above apply. But the Cinema trade should have the right of appeal to the Central Board and not to the Local Governments.

36. (a) No. This is quite apparent from the evidence tendered before the Committee. No. I have already stressed them above.

(b) Yes, without exception when the matter as regards a film is referred to the Board. Yes. Plenty of gentlemen of suitable standing are available for reasonable remuneration to devote sufficient time for the proper examination of films.

37. (a) Yes. They are more than adequate.

(b) More safeguards would be needless and prejudicial to the trade.

38. Yes. It has transpired in the evidence before the Committee that many films passed in Bombay have been banned in Bengal as objectionable, e.g., *The Triumph of the Rat*, *Orphans of the Storms*, etc., etc. I remember reading in the papers that the well-known film, *"The Ten Commandments"*, which was exhibited in Bombay and Bengal and drew crowded houses, was suddenly banned in Delhi and another province.

39. Not that I am aware of.

40. Certainly not. Unless you can enforce strict censorship in the matter of posters, handbills and advertisements in other affairs. No.

41. Films which do not come up to the adequate moral standard are seldom exhibited in India.

42. The trade should receive proper representation on the Boards and also receive sympathetic treatment.

43. (a) No. How can there be a strict control over the export of films which are of such a small size that they can be carried in the vest pockets of tourists and travellers?

(b) (c) Does not arise.

44. Public bodies should insist upon the production and exhibition of films of a high standard, which would convey some instruction or moral. The press should maintain a staff of independent and impartial reviewers and not be guided by the opinions and descriptions supplied by the Cinema Trade.

45. (a) No. There is already a strict censorship over film production. No more control by the State is necessary in the very interests of the trade.

(b) Yes. This should entirely be a Municipal affair.

### Oral Evidence of Mr. N. C. GHOSE, Bar-at-Law, on Tuesday, the 20th December 1927.

*Chairman:* You don't go to the cinema yourself much, Mr. Ghose?

A. What is meant by "much". I go there say once a fortnight or once a month according as I see a good picture advertised. The other day I saw the picture "If Winter Comes" based on Hutchinson's novel of that name. It created a sensation and I read in the reviews that the book dealt with social problems during and after the War. So I went and saw it. It was a bold novel.

Q. But how often do you go?

A. Say once a month. I am not a frequenter of the cinema.

Q. On an average you go once a month?

A. Yes.

Q. And when you do go where do you go generally?

A. If I take my womenfolk I go to a cinema in the Indian Quarter— for instance the other day I went with them to see "Sankaracharya." After half an hour I came away.

Q. You take your womenfolk to Indian shows?

A. They can only go to the Bowanpore show which is near my house, the Crown Cinema, or sometimes when there was another cinema of which my cousin was one of the directors—it is now the Purna Theatre—they used to go there frequently; but then I would not take them, but my brothers or nephews would.

Q. Why do you say they can only go there, why don't you take them to the fashionable theatres?

A. Although in my family most of us have been to England, there are no arrangements made for Indian ladies.

Q. You mean for *pardah nashins*?

A. Not even *pardah nashins*. No special arrangements are made for ladies upstairs and they don't like to sit downstairs.

Q. I understand Brahma ladies make it a point not to go to the cinemas.

A. I don't know. I find them everywhere. I have seen them at the Elphinstone. I have seen them also in Madan theatres.

Q. I heard—I don't know how far my information is correct, but so many things we have to learn in this country,—I heard it was a part of their religion not to go to the theatre or cinema, or rather that they observed such a rule.

A. I see Indian ladies in *saris* going everywhere, whether they are Brahmos or Indian Christians I cannot say. I beg your pardon. I have seen Mrs. P. K.

Ray, who is a Brahmo, I have seen her personally going to the Picture House with her youngest daughter. It did not strike me till now.

Q. But generally Western shows are not patronised by Indian ladies, by ordinary Hindu ladies.

A. Why not? The Purna Theatre shows only Western pictures. Indian ladies go there. They very rarely go out and this is a means of recreation for them. They have no parks in Bhowanipore, nowhere to go and so they go to the cinema and spend two hours in enjoyment. It is some diversion in their lives.

Q. You think then the cinema habit is growing among the people?

A. It is growing. The other day I saw an advertisement of a cinema in Ghoramara, Rajshahi, for a lady attendant. I have been to Darjeeling and Kurseong and I have seen the hill people flocking to the cinema.

Q. The original hill people?

A. Yes; and Indian gentlemen go there in May and June; I have seen them also.

Q. Do you travel much in the mofussil?

A. I do not travel much, but I have been to these places. I go to Darjeeling every year, to Kurseong and Dehra Dun too.

Q. Have you seen any travelling cinemas anywhere?

A. I have not seen any but I have heard about them.

Q. Then you cannot tell us. Now I suppose you belong to a very ancient family in Calcutta holding a good social position. You were both an official and a zamindar. What do you think is the general effect of the cinema on the people of the country?

A. All that I can say is that it has some educational value. I take my children sometimes to the cinema because I find if they go there they learn something. As Indian schools are now constituted they are not a good influence on the children. I am speaking personally. If they want to see an aeroplane or something extraordinary, say Lindbergh arriving, my boy sees the advertisement in the "Statesman". In the "Statesman" pictures are shown and my boys say "Father will you take us?". In that way the cinema has an educative value.

Q. So that you would like to see it enlarged?

A. Well, I should like to see it enlarged but I would like to see the prices of admission reduced too.

Q. You think the present prices are high.

A. For this country. In England you get six penny and shilling seats. Here it is Rs. 1 and 2, and you can't get even those sometimes; no room.

Q. Prices here are comparatively high?

A. Oh yes, and look at the comfort you get in England—big places, well ventilated. There is nothing like it in this country.

Q. Are you now referring to the cinemas in the fashionable quarters or in the Indian quarters.

A. Well, I think both. Look at the Empress Cinema. It is a tin shed and is so hot inside. In May and June it is like a furnace. They have no exhaust fans and there are people smoking all the time. The atmosphere is very bad.

Q. Yes I see smoking is very common here, so much so that it makes the pictures sometimes hazy.

A. If they had exhaust fans they would draw away the bad air.

Q. Do you think there is a sufficient supply of Indian films in this country?

A. I don't know what you mean by the word "sufficient". As compared with foreign films the supply is very small, but lots of things have to be taken into consideration. I mean take a film like "Ben Hur". It costs something

like £1,400,000 to produce it. Where will you get the money or the place to produce it here?

*Q.* What is it you have got there?

*A.* This is a book of cuttings which I have made about the cinema. In England up to that date, 1,200,000 people had been to see the film "Ben Hur".

*Q.* Why do you preserve these cuttings?

*A.* When I saw you were coming to sit here I bought all these papers to enlighten you all. I went near the Bristol Hotel and bought as many papers as I could afford. Because they have articles every week on the Cinema. Here you are, "Gossip of the Movies" by Looker-On. Here again is an account of a great Insect film, a marvellous film, very educative.

*Q.* At any rate this Committee has kept you busy investigating.

*A.* I tried to get some information for you.

*Q.* Are you satisfied with the class of films which are now shown in the Western shows?

*A.* I am not satisfied. I have found that films are cut and I have found even title headings cut. It is not fair to a reading man. Now I see a picture in the English illustrated papers, I wait for that picture to come, I go to the cinema and I don't find the particular pictures I saw in the papers. It is not fair to an educated man.

*Q.* What do you mean, there should be no censorship: is that your idea?

*A.* No what I mean to say is these pictures are shown in the illustrated papers. I want to see them in the films when they come here and I find they are not to be seen. Let me give you an instance. Mr. Rex Beach's novel "The Barrier". In the film some titles were cut out. It was in handwriting and I think the handwriting must have been Madan's handwriting. They had censored the title headings. Now what is the sense in that? I can read the book anywhere but I cannot see the title-headings of the film.

*Q.* What I want to know is are you satisfied that the pictures now shown have no baneful effect on the people?

*A.* I have not found any and I can say that with some authority because I belong to a very big Hindu joint family. We have got grounds in our homes where every morning and evening young men and boys who have nowhere to play come to play with our boys. To-day now they are playing cricket. They have sports of all kinds, football matches and so on. Every day I see and meet these young men and boys. Any bad effect may come from the schools, but not by seeing pictures.

*Q.* You do not think pictures have a baneful effect?

*A.* In my experience of Bhowanipore I have not seen any such bad effect. And I have been to Darjeeling and Dacca.

*Q.* In Calcutta?

*A.* In Calcutta I have not seen any such bad effect.

*Q.* You have a young Bar, young vakils and college students.

*A.* No it has not had a bad effect; the Bar if anything has improved wonderfully latterly. I mean it is a very hard struggle. Men do not drink now. The whole moral tone of the Bar has improved wonderfully. The men are of quite a different type now.

*Q.* You have given us a very lucid statement. I do not think it is necessary to trouble you much further. You are satisfied then that there is nothing that no more stricter censorship is needed—on the other hand, you want it to be more liberal?

*A.* Well, as I find the censorship in Bengal I think it is an outrage on educated men, the way that films are censored. I have seen in the papers that films allowed in Bombay are not allowed here. Why should it be so?

*Q.* Men vary and standards vary from place to place.



A. Then I can go to Bombay and see the picture and come back a better man!

*Mr. Green:* Some films passed in Bengal have been banned in Bombay.

A. I am not satisfied with the Board of Censors here. I will just give you an instance. You have got advisory committees for Railways, you compare the committee in Calcutta with the committee in the United Provinces. In the United Provinces committee the whole province is represented.

*Chairman:* You think the Bengal board is not properly representative of the communities.

A. No, it is not, and it is not representative of people of culture, education and broad outlook of life.

Q. You want a board which will have a broader outlook.

A. Yes and a Board that will face facts.

Q. And not be too nervous?

A. There is nothing to be nervous about. What is the use of censorship, if I may say so, when worse things are sold in the streets of Calcutta.

Q. Still you recognise the difference between a picture which appeals to the eye at once and which appeals to a large mass of people, and a book, pamphlet or paper which hardly half a dozen people look at. Here crowds of people go to look at the films.

A. What about the crowds who look at picture postcards sold in the streets of Calcutta with kissing and cuddling shown on them? They are seen by thousands of people in a minute.

Q. They cannot be for open sale?

A. Open sale in College Street and the New Market. How many do you want? I will get you some at once. We have travelled about, we go in tram cars and motor cars; we see things; we don't shut our eyes.

Q. You mean to say picture postcards showing couples are sold in the streets of Calcutta?

A. Yes in the shops and they have very large sales.

Q. People are prepared to buy them?

A. Not Bengali people, but *sahibs*, *mems*, soldiers. The Bengali cannot afford to pay 2 or 3 or 4 annas for a postcard.

*Mr. Coolman:* What is the good of my buying them? I subscribe to the papers and I see them there?

*Chairman:* You think there should be one central Board for all censoring.

A. Yes, my own personal view is there should be no censorship, if a film has been passed by the Government of a civilised country, a European country. What is good enough for England is good enough for me. Those very pictures are shown in the English illustrated papers. The public see them in advance and then the films come here and are banned. I will show you here. Here are some pictures of "The Devil Dancer", a film that will soon be shown in England. What will be its fate here?

Q. You think such a film should not be shown here?

A. No I don't say that. I see this picture; I have got it in my mind's eye; I am waiting for it to come out.

*Mr. Green:* Why are you so keen on seeing this particular picture?

A. I am not at all keen. I would not have looked at it if it had not been for the Committee. I thought I would show you the picture. The film may come here and it may be banned.

*Chairman:* You don't think there is any harm in showing such pictures to our youth in this country. Do not put it on political grounds.

A. Not a bit. What is the harm? It is much better to see a thing straight off than to picture it in your imagination.

Q. Of course you belong to a very big family and I ask your opinion as being the head also of a branch of the family—you don't think there is any danger to the youth of the country by showing such films.

A. I don't think so.

Mr. Green: You mentioned you went to see the film "Sankaracharya" and after half an hour you went away.

A. Because it was very hot inside. I cannot stand the heat; I am not well.

Q. I thought it might be linked up with your answer to 6 (a) where you say one would be fed up with only purely Indian films. You want to see all films?

A. Of course I want to see all sorts of films—Western life, travel pictures.

Q. In answer to 20 (a) you say it is a criminal waste for Government to subsidise film companies. We have had it in evidence that it hardly pays producing companies to produce films for the purposes of education, public health, agriculture—public utility films. Would you like to see this kind of film produced?

A. Certainly. The E. B. S. Railway had a special train during the last Puja holidays, they brought villagers to Calcutta and they showed those films and 700 people saw the films and enjoyed them.

Q. But you are against Government subsidising film companies. You want Government to produce their own films of that nature?

A. Why not? It is very cheap.

Q. You have no objection to Government producing its own films.

A. I will show you how. Government has only to spend £5. Here is a little Pathe camera which costs only that. And the films are as cheap. If the Government cannot spend Rs. 100 I don't see what it can do. The films are sold at 2s. 6d. for 30 feet, and this 30 feet film is equal to 100 feet of standard film. What you see in 100 feet you see in 30 feet in this.

Q. And you think that kind of film will be good enough for the purposes I have in mind?

A. It shows a picture. I can give you the measurements.

Q. But you are satisfied that this will be good enough for the railway shows?

A. No. But what I mean to say is considering how cheap cinema cameras now are, it is not at all an expensive affair.

Q. I will take you on to another point now. You said you want the Board of Censors to be more broad minded. Is not there a difficulty that if you make it more representative you may make it less broad-minded? We have had a witness here who, I understand, is the principal of the biggest college in Bengal. He thinks that films are thoroughly demoralising. Now he might find a place on an enlarged and more representative board. Would not his views clash with yours?

A. A man may be the principal of a college but he may not be in touch with the students. When I was a student of the Presidency College the professors were not in touch with us with the exception of Prof. Hornell—not at all in touch; and the one man, who was in touch, is still in touch with me even from Hongkong.

Q. I see you want a Central Board and you also suggest that the censoring should be done by a whole-time officer, who should, you say, go about inspecting all films and passing them. If he has any doubts as regards any particular film, he should refer it to the Central Board. What exactly is your idea, that he should go about from one part of the country to another?

A. I wrote that . . .

Q. If you have not given any special attention to it, I won't trouble you.

A. I have given attention to it. But I don't know what your real intention is. I would like a Central Board with one man as a Film censor to see ordinary films, the same as in Calcutta where there is a part time officer and he inspects all the films and those films about which he is doubtful he refers to a sub-committee.

*Q.* That is your idea of the Central Committee.

*A.* Yes, because the Central Committee cannot have the time to see every film.

*Colonel Crawford:* I notice, Mr. Ghose, in your answer to the question of British Empire films—I don't want to take up that question—you make the suggestion that title headings will have to be rendered in the different vernaculars of the province in which they are exhibited. Do you think we should recommend something of the sort for all pictures, that all pictures should have their captions not only in English but in the vernacular too—all pictures whether Indian produced or Western produced, in order to enable audiences knowing only the vernaculars to follow the picture properly?

*A.* I don't think that will be necessary.

*Q.* You think they can follow the film without it?

*A.* I mean the ordinary fighting picture, what is the use of rendering it into the vernacular—a man sees it and understands it.

*Q.* There are many pictures I cannot myself follow without the aid of captions.

*A.* At Calcutta, for instance, there is Hindi, there is Urdu, there is Bengali; into how many of these languages will you translate it?

*Q.* I admit the difficulties of it. You think it is a thing you would like to see but you think it is impracticable?

*A.* I only said it in the case of British Commonwealth films because they ought to be made intelligible to all.

*Q.* You say that Indian ladies are compelled to take their children and even babies to the cinema as they cannot leave them at home. Don't you think that some of the films will be too strong—I don't mean from a moral point of view—for young minds, particularly when scenes of torture or brutality are shown?

*A.* If you stop it, then you will be stopping Indian ladies from going to cinemas and theatres altogether. We have got to face the problem. You must not think of Calcutta alone, but you have to think of villages. I shall give you a concrete instance. A *mela* is held annually in Sova Bazar Rajbati, during the Durga Puja. There small sheds are erected for poor people to see any shows and so forth. These poor people, men, women and children for two annas see a picture for 15 minutes, and naturally the ladies take their little children with them. Now, the X'mas week is approaching and there are hundreds of ladies and gentlemen from the mofussil coming to Calcutta to see their relations or for sight seeing, and some of the cinemas are giving three shows every day. Naturally ladies will take their children with them for they cannot leave their children at home. It is a great social problem.

*Q.* Do you agree with me that some of the film pictures depicting brutality and torture will be too strong for young minds?

*A.* They may be, but what is the use of preventing them. If you cannot prevent *nautches*, dances, *jatras* and other things which are shown in the villages even. In villages *nautches* are shown and the condition is much worse, most of them are very suggestive.

*Q.* I am not thinking of the moral side. Take a Jackie Coogan picture where he is being tortured for some reason. Don't you think that an incident like that will produce a bad effect on a young mind?

*A.* I have not heard of any such effect on children. Of course, some of the English papers have tried to make out that the cinema produces a bad effect on young children and so on. I have looked up my book of 'cuttings' and I find they have so far been able to show only one instance. My own view is, that the cinema has not produced any baneful effect on any child so far. What will happen afterwards nobody can say.

*Chairman:* Do you mean if any investigation had been held?

*A.* I have been trying to see what effect the cinema has produced on the minds of Indians, and I have so far been able to trace no instance.

*Colonel Crawford:* I believe it has only a momentary effect, the pictures will excite them or depress them and you would agree that such things will have a harmful effect on tender minds?

A. For instance, on a man of forty, like me, a picture depicting some sorrowful scene might produce a melancholy effect. Sometimes when I read some books or see a picture I begin to shed tears. We Indians are a sentimental people. (A newspaper cutting from the "Statesman" under the heading "Cinema Drama in Real Life", was handed to the Chairman by the witness).

Q. I understand that you advocate the view that if a film is passed by the British Board of Censors, it may be taken as good enough for exhibition in any part of India. Has any community in India ever said that a particular picture is offensive to it and therefore the exhibitors are definitely hurting their feelings by showing such a picture?

A. There has not been any case like that except the case of "The Moon of Israel". Even here the action taken was not justified at all. The film was shown for fully two years in other places, and because some rowdies created a scene in Delhi, the attention of the authorities was drawn to it. It was due to a lamentable lack of capacity to maintain law and order. If a rowdy kicks up a row, he has got to be turned out and the price of his ticket refunded to him. If a man kicks up a row in the theatre, then all you have to do is to send him away by refunding to him the charge. If you yield to rowdism, then no film could possibly be shown under such circumstances. That is done in England. I have read of cases in which the management has refunded the money and turned out the rowdy who kicks up a row.

Q. Now take a film, for instance, in which it is intended to show up the priesthood of a particular religion in a bad light. Do you think that religion has any justification for saying that that film should not be shown?

A. I could not answer it. If there is anything really wrong in the film, then you have the power to stop it.

Q. You say it could be stopped on the representation of some community or section of the people?

A. You have got Section 144, Criminal Procedure Code—that well-known section,—and you can stop any film under that section.

*Mr. Green:* What section are you referring to?

A. I am referring to Section 144, Criminal Procedure Code, that famous section, the panacea for all evils.

*Colonel Crawford:* You don't think therefore there is any necessity for making provision to meet the needs of any particular community?

A. No. Those of us who have been to England know that there is a strong moral influence there, and they are not allowed to show pictures which are immoral or of a bad nature. There is a very strong public opinion there. There is nothing like that in India. If there is any bad picture, they will not put any advertisements, the Churches will not allow it, and everybody will kick up a row. If therefore such pictures can be shown in England, I see no reason why they should not be shown here without further censorship here.

Q. Do you think the masses in India are able to take the right perspective?

A. The pictures have already been censored in England, and if they are good enough for the masses there, they ought to be good enough for our masses as well.

*Mr. Green:* Many films come here without a certificate?

A. That is why I say that a Central Board should see those.

*Colonel Crawford:* Are you satisfied with the scenes shown in the films to-day?

A. I have not seen any bad films so far.

**Q.** For instance, take some of the close-up scenes, like deep kissing which go beyond decency in some cases? Do you think they are fit subjects for public exhibition?

**A.** If these things can be shown in newspapers and if they can be sold in the streets of Calcutta, what is the use of preventing them on the screen. There is nothing wrong in kissing.

**Q.** And you think it can be shown on the screen?

**A.** It may or may not be shown, but that has no effect on the public.

**Q.** Where would you draw the line? Would you go to the ultimate end of love?

**A.** No.

**Q.** You must draw the line somewhere?

**A.** No picture has ever been produced so far of that nature, and I don't think it will ever be produced.

**Mr. Neogy:** Your point, I take it, is this, that if a particular film possesses a certificate from the British Board of Censors, you would take their certificate as the judgment of the British people that western life is not misrepresented in that particular picture?

**A.** Yes, quite right, that is my meaning.

**Q.** It has been suggested that the uneducated people in this country have not sufficient acquaintance with western life in order to enable them to interpret certain aspects of that life quite correctly. Kissing may be quite inoffensive to you, but it may have some baneful effect on the uneducated people. Don't you think so?

**A.** The first thing I would like to know is, what do you mean by "uneducated" people. Take the lascars or people who are employed on board a ship and who have been to England and other places. They certainly know much more than some of us who have been to England and lived in the country. What are you going to teach them? They know more of some phases of western life than I do.

**Q.** You showed a picture of "The Devil Dancer". What makes you think that a picture like that would be banned here by the Bengal Board, because I have seen such dancing scenes in the theatres of Calcutta, musical operas, ballet dancing and such things, and they are not objected to by the authorities?

**A.** I saw a list of pictures banned here, and I thought if they were banned, this picture also might be banned. An English company came here and I saw there some dancing scenes, and I thought that if they were not banned, why should these pictures be banned here?

**Q.** Then your point is that, although a particular kind of dancing may not be banned on the stage, if a film were taken of that particular dance, it might be banned by the Board?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Your cousin was running the Purna Theatre in Bhowanipur, and we were told that in that theatre there used to be ballet shows. There is nothing to prevent ballet shows being shown?

**A.** It was done by Madans only a month or so ago.

**Q.** There is no sense, therefore, in preventing the exhibition of pictures corresponding to such dances, is that your point?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Have you any information about "The Orphans of the Storm" which was shown for a few days in Calcutta and then banned?

**A.** I heard about it a few days ago from a poor clerk who lives near my house. He said he had seen the film,—it was run for a few days,—and afterwards Mr. Day was killed. Then the film was banned I do not know anything about it. The clerk said he had seen the film but he saw nothing wrong in it. He is still the same clerk, it has had no influence on him.

**Q.** Do you know anything about "The Triumph of the Rat". Have you come across any newspaper notice about it?

**A.** Yes, I have brought a cutting. It is from an English paper, "The Daily Sketch", and they say that Lord Downer's family took part in the film, I mean a member of the family of a British Peer had taken part in the production of the film, he had actually acted in it. I decline to believe that a member of the British aristocracy would take part in the making of a film of an immoral nature. I have brought the cutting with me. (The witness read out an extract from a newspaper article).

*Chairman:* Does this refer to "The Triumph of the Rat"?

**A.** Yes.

*Mr. Coatman:* I quite agree, Mr. Ghose, that "The Triumph of the Rat" should never have been banned in Calcutta.

*Mr. Neogy:* Then your idea is that the police should have little or nothing to do with the Board of Censors?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** The Board should consist of men of liberal education and wide knowledge?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** And if the police were to have any hand at all in the Board, it cannot be more than that of a member or so, that is your idea?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** The police should not dominate the Board of Censors?

**A.** Let them preserve order if there is anything wrong.

**Q.** Have you any experience of any cinema picture misrepresenting India in the west?

**A.** I only saw a company which brought out some pictures about India. It was known as the Dorsey Film Co. It showed travel pictures. They showed some pictures about India in the Albion Theatre, the like of which I had never seen before. They showed the Maharaj Kumar of Udaipur as a cripple. I did not know that. They showed a picture of Hyderabad State and they showed several other things, the like of which I had not seen before. I don't remember more about it now.

**Q.** In connection with the question of The Empire reciprocity scheme, I think you bring out a very good point which has not so far been touched upon. You think that if the material condition of the other parts of the Empire were to be shown in India, it might lead to further discontent in the country, because the people then would compare their own condition with the condition prevailing in other parts of the British Empire. Is that your point?

**A.** Mr. Rangachariar's lectures on Australia have already created discontent in my mind.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* In answer to No. 26B you have taken the Mussulmans to task very badly?

**A.** I have not done anything of the kind. I have only said that it was the view of some Mussulmans which was expressed in a newspaper. I read about it in newspapers.

*Chairman:* Was it about "The Moon of Israel"?

**A.** Yes.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* What was the cause of hurting their feelings?

**A.** I don't admit that that film could possibly have hurt their feelings, because the film was shown already for over two years in different parts of the country without a single complaint, even from Moslems.

**Q.** In answer to 42, you say that the trade does not receive sympathetic treatment now. What do you mean by that?

A. I mean the way in which films are censored acts as a deterrent on the trade. I often see from the papers that such and such a film has been cut by the censors and so on.

Q. You mean about banning pictures?

A. Yes.

Q. I thought you said that the trade did not receive proper treatment at the hands of the Board?

A. No, it does not get sympathetic treatment in this country, because they have got to pay heavy fees, and if they make an appeal, the principle applicable is "heads I lose and tails I lose". They have again to pay extra fees even if they win from a decision of the Sub-Committee.

Q. Then you say that the cinema trade supplies the newspapers with reviews of certain films shown and so on?

A. Yes, they supply it. I am sure some of the Indian papers know nothing about Indian films. Take the "Shankaracharya" film. These papers know nothing about this film, and all the press notices were supplied by the trade for publication. The English papers like the "Englishman" and "Capital" have their own reviewers and write independent articles.

### Written Statement of the Bengal Presidency Council of Women, dated the 3rd December 1927.

#### *Introductory.*

1. The following answers give the considered reply of the Bengal Presidency Council of Women, an association consisting of upwards of 250 members and 24 affiliated societies engaged in varying social activities affecting the welfare of women and children and which is connected with the Cinematograph Industry only to the extent by which it affects the welfare of the people of Bengal.

#### *General.*

2. (a) (1) We consider that three-fourths of the Indian audience (or slightly less than that proportion) at a cinema in Calcutta is composed of those belonging to the educated middle classes, the lower middle classes preponderating.

(2) It is considered that the remaining third to fourth part of the Indian section of the audience is illiterate.

Judging by the present erection of new theatres and the queues which form outside the existing theatres prior to a performance, we consider that the cinemas are increasing in popularity.

(b) In the European quarter of Calcutta, the average cinema audience is composed of a few Europeans and Anglo-Indians, Babus of the student and clerk class forming about 75 per cent. of those present. Only 25 per cent. are illiterate, this element being composed of smaller shop-keepers, servants and coolies. In the Indian quarter, the European and Anglo-Indian element is not in evidence.

(c) We consider that ten per cent. are children and forty per cent. are adolescents between the ages of 14 and 21.

### PART II.

24. (a) Yes. Sexual plays are even more objectionable in the East than in the West due to the Indian outlook upon demonstrativeness being such as it is.

Parts of films depicting public houses, night clubs and night life in western cities, as well as those of crime in which the villain attains his object, might be eliminated. Revolutionary subjects and mob violence may tend to undermine British prestige.

(b) No; but the small number which appear are more harmful here than in the West as the Indian audience, though mostly an educated one, has an untravelled outlook upon on life, so accepting the realistic fabrications of western life as the truth.

(c) Sex films, crime films, mob violence films and those derogatory to British prestige are harmful to the adolescents comprising 40 per cent. of the audience whose views are still immature and easily moulded.

(d) We think that a clause prohibiting "close up" of sexual dramas should be introduced and that a wider connotation of these terms be adopted.

25. Yes.

26. (a) Yes. We believe "The Thousand and One Nights", "The Moon of Israel", "The Light of Asia" and "The White Sister" offended Hindus, Jews, Buddhists and Indians generally, respectively. There is also a tendency to present Hinduism and Mohammedanism as narrow fanatical creeds.

27. (a) Yes; though only actualities are presented on the films, they are judged by a standard which considers the flaunting of sex to be improper. We do not consider that western life is misrepresented, though exaggerated, but owing to the simple and severely moral ideas in India and the widely different outlook on home life and the relation between the sexes, western social life is widely misjudged. Love and courtship outside marriage, and open and warm demonstrations of love are too much associated in the Indian mind with relations with a mistress to be properly understood. In his home life the Indian observes a severe restraint and mutual respect in the relations between the sexes and it shocks him to see this flaunted to the public gaze. This in conjunction with seeing films dealing with complex sex problems gives Indians a general idea that a lot of immorality exists in the West. In this connexion, also, the sensational film which makes the criminal a hero and throws a glamour around crime by exalting it to an art, has a demoralising effect in India. Films create a lot of harm by encouraging a craving for sensation and excitement.

(b) Yes. But novels and plays depicting Indian life and Indian legends and history such as "Krishna Kanta's Will" and "Chandidas" be shown more frequently.

27. (b) Films which misrepresent Indian life, showing the Indian as the villain of the piece or as a servile immoral being, are often shown in England.

28. (a) The class of film harmful to children are sensational serials with many thrills, encouraging a craving for sensation and excitement. The fact that the story is continued keeps its memory fresh in the child's mind.

(b) Western life is misjudged, comradeship ("Sex" and "love" films or platonic friendship being taken for illicit love. An intelligent understanding of the peculiar psychology of the communities is necessary.

29. No. In India only ten per cent. of an audience is under 14 years of age. The chief element to be considered is the susceptible adolescent who would be drawn to see a picture so labelled instantly. No children should be admitted to other than a children's performance, unaccompanied by a responsible adult.

30. No; but we consider that the abolition of half-price tickets to children would eliminate a large proportion of them, especially if children's performances at half-price be instituted. Nothing in this nature seems to be given here. Historical, geographical and nature studies would appeal greatly to a child at its impressionable age. There is doubt whether children under seven should be excluded on account of the film being detrimental to their health and eyesight whilst of no educational value. Recently the film "Alan Cobham's Flight" was shown to an audience of children and it was greatly appreciated.

31. Yes, if vested in an effective Board.

32.

33. (a) There are many novels and plays capable of reproduction which are essentially "clean".



(b) Certainly not, with people of good upbringing.

(c) No.

34. (a) No.

(b) Yes.

(c) One nominee from the Central Board could be appointed to each Provincial Board and be made responsible to the former.

(d) By Government grant or levy of an Amusement tax.

35. (a) No.

(b) Yes.

36. (a) No. We consider Inspectors have not sufficient standing for the work entrusted to them. The position in Calcutta is a half-time one, the Inspector being Registrar of the Bengal Council as well. A full-time official is a necessity and he should possess education, a high moral sense and some social standing.

(b) Yes. There are more leisured women of standing than men in Calcutta and we suggest that the Bengal Presidency Council of Women be asked to help in this respect.

37. (a) No.

(b) Yes.

38. Yes. We believe that the following films were removed after having been shown in Calcutta:—"The White Sister"; "The Moon of Israel." The film entitled "The Last of His Race" had the word "Red" deleted after the first showing of the name piece, "Indian" alone appearing from then onwards. The film finished with the phrase:—"If this be the White Man, Thank God! I'm an Indian." The film "Is This Marriage" had some objectionable love scenes depicted in it. Presumably these films were censored elsewhere before showing in Calcutta.

39. No? Native States.

40. Most certainly. Such could easily be submitted to a full-time censor or to members of the Board.

Yes. Of the innumerable examples of ugly and immoral posters, which are an outrage in a country where the touching of any woman in public is looked upon as immoral or a grave breach of etiquette, we cite this example. A handbill portraying a nude European woman attired in an inadequate veil and a mask and having a prominent question mark placed upon her was recently distributed at a central picture theatre in Calcutta, advertising a picture to be shown at another theatre of the same group. A border of smaller nude women and bedroom scenes decorated the outside of the poster.

41. No.

**Oral Evidence of Mrs. V. G. COULSON, M.B., B.S., and Mrs. LATIKA BASU, B.Litt. (Oxon.), representing the Bengal Presidency Council of Women, on Tuesday, the 20th December 1927. Miss ARBUTHNOT, Secretary, Society for the Protection of Children in India, was also present.**

*Chairman:* Both you Dr. Coulson and Mrs. Basu have been selected for giving evidence before this committee?

A. Yes.

Q. The memorandum submitted by you, Dr. Coulson, has been approved by your committee?

A. Yes.

Q. Can you tell us how many people were present at that meeting?

A. Between 25 and 30, I should say.

Q. How many of them were Indians and how many Europeans?

A. I should say about a third Indian. (After consultation with Mrs. Basu). Perhaps only 4 or 5 were Indians.

Q. And in your membership also, what is the proportion of Indians to Europeans?

A. I suppose only a third is representative of Indians.

Q. Amongst the Indians I don't suppose you get the orthodox people in your society?

A. I think some of them are orthodox.

Q. Are both of you in the habit of going to the cinema much?

A. Fairly frequently.

Q. You can speak from personal experience?

A. Yes.

Q. And of course we are more interested to get your views on what effect it has on the social life of the country. I don't propose to trouble you about the proportion of the audience. These are all mere guesses.

A. Yes. It is very hard to estimate.

Q. On the whole what is your impression of the effect of the cinema on the people generally? You think it is for the good of the people?

A. It should be for the good of the people.

Q. But as it is now, is it for their good?

A. I think so. It is broadly speaking working for the good of the people.

Mrs. Basu: As far as the Indian community is concerned, I go very often to the cinemas in the Indian section of the town, and I don't think the majority of the audience really either take the things in the proper light or that it does them much good. Because of the western life that is represented. They are not used to seeing that life here and I think it sometimes has a demoralising effect on them.

Q. Are you speaking of Indian ladies or Indian men?

A. Well, I am speaking mostly of the Indian men. There are not very many ladies that go there.

Q. You mean the educated youth?

A. Not so much the educated but mostly the uneducated and half-educated.

Q. Now, what places are you thinking of when you speak of these people?

A. Well, I am speaking of the cinemas in the northern part of the town.

Q. The Crown Cinema for instance?

A. Yes. Indeed, I am very glad to see that they are having Indian films in the Crown Cinema and the Empress Cinema, on the Bhowanipur side. Because I think Indians understand them better and they really have a better effect on them. They are more broadening. They see their own literature and their own life represented and they understand the spirit of this better. The western films are too foreign for them to absorb the ideas properly.

Q. But of course there are foreign films of all sorts?

A. Comics, I think, are appreciated.

Q. And the class of film which you have in mind which have a demoralising effect are the social dramas which depict life as it is supposed to be lived, where romance enters into the subject.

A. Yes, that is right.

Q. Is it your view that all such subjects have a baneful influence or only certain representations?

A. Not all subjects.

Q. I mean social dramas. You must take the view that all western life has a demoralising effect on the eastern youth.

A. No, I don't think so.

*Q.* Some people won't have any cinema. That is why I ask. Now I suppose you have in mind, if you don't mind my putting it, passionate love-making scenes?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* You think they should be banned altogether? Or what is your view?

*A.* No. What I think is that it would be better not to ban them altogether just now, but as far as possible to encourage Indian subjects to be shown, gradually to replace western by Indian films.

*Q.* Of course the evidence before us is that the social dramas where these scenes occur are not interesting and they are not cared for by the masses of the people. And it is only college youths and the so-called educated Indians who care for them. That is the bulk of the evidence before us. Do you agree that this is a correct estimate?

*A.* I quite agree.

*Q.* And you think really that the class of people who see such films are not able to understand it in their proper perspective. I suppose you take it in the proper perspective?

*A.* I think so, but at the same time I am prepared to see Indian films more represented.

*Q.* You want western films to be replaced by Indian films? But you see the difficulty expressed by the trade is that Indian films, if they exhibit them in the places where they exhibit these western films, they will lose their customers, most of whom are Europeans and Anglo-Indians.

*A.* I quite agree, so far as the central part of the town is concerned, it is impossible.

*Q.* And you don't object to their being shown to the Europeans and Anglo-Indians?

*A.* Not at all.

*Q.* I mean, as women engaged in social welfare work of all classes of people?

*Dr. Coulson:* Well, I think the "close-up" scenes should be cut out even for Europeans and Anglo-Indians. Some of them should not be shown to anybody. You will find a large percentage of Europeans in Calcutta very rarely attend films unless they know perfectly well what the films are going to depict, on that account.

*Q.* Does not the remedy lie in their own hands? Why do they attend such cinemas and patronise such shows?

*A.* A large number do not.

*Q.* They have their cinemas here and they are afraid to touch anything which will drive them away.

*A.* I think they ought to be touched.

*Q.* For instance Mrs. Basu suggests substituting Indian films.

*A.* You won't get the European and Anglo-Indians to attend these shows

*Q.* That will kill the trade?

*A.* Not at all, if Indian films are shown in the Indian quarter.

*Q.* But would you agree to go to a cinema where you only see comics or only serials? You want some amusement and romance. You go to the cinema for amusement, not for serious study.

*A.* Certainly.

*Q.* Then if you take away romance from it?

*A.* There are mediums of romance.

*Q.* It is a question of degree. There are some people who think that the line is too strictly drawn. Others think it is too broadly drawn.

*A.* Yes, it is very hard to get the right line.

*Q.* No two of us agree as to what is proper. The thing is, do you advise that it is the proper view to take for this committee that they should not interfere unless it affects the morality of the people of the country?

A. I do most certainly.

Q. It is a question not so much of misrepresentation or misunderstanding as the baneful effect upon the people?

A. I think that is very true.

Q. Simply because some people tend to misunderstand that is no reason why you should cut off films.

A. But I think the large part of the audience in the present cinemas is composed of adolescents who are very likely to be influenced, banefully influenced.

Mr. Green: Adolescents of all communities?

A. Yes.

Chairman: So that you don't draw the line between European or Anglo-Indian and Indian boys?

A. No, they are all susceptible.

Q. If you put it on that broad ground it is understandable, but some people put it on the ground that the east is unable to understand the west and the west is being misrepresented in India and therefore we should ban it.

Mrs. Basu: No, I don't agree, but when I suggested Indian films, what I meant was that our education is being absolutely replaced by western education here and the cinema is going to have a great effect in replacing western culture with our own. How are we going to create our own culture?

Q. You want to replace western culture by eastern culture?

A. Not to replace it, but let our own culture grow, and so if we have the films in our hands, we will have it western or eastern just as we like. For instance, dancing as it is represented in Tagore's school is not eastern, it is a mixture, and developed by the Indian mind. That is my idea.

Q. You want a comingling of eastern and western culture?

A. By us and not by any outside agency.

Q. Therefore you would like the censor board to be composed of Indians who would decide for themselves?

A. For the Indian part. But I don't think it would be quite fair to have it absolutely Indian.

Q. I don't say that. You would have a large Indian element on the censor board to decide what is good for India?

A. As far as Indians are concerned I think we should be represented by Indians, because I think we can understand our own people best.

Q. You don't think a body of 7, composed of 5 Europeans and 2 Indians, can decide what is good for Indians, from that point of view?

A. No.

Dr. Coulson: I don't think that altogether agrees with the views of our council.

Q. Yes I rather think not.

A. That is purely Mrs. Basu's own idea. It is not fair to put it down as our council's view.

Q. It is bound to be so, especially when you have a large body of Europeans.

A. I consider that we should be represented to some extent.

Q. Now the point that we are struggling against is this, and speaking for myself I find it even now difficult to come to a conclusion on this point, that there is a large divergence of view. One view is that this western life is unsuited to this country, that it is depicted in an extraordinary way and has a baneful influence on the youth of this country. The other point of view is, let the country know the best and the worst in other parts of the world. Education is the proper remedy for this, and you should not shut out certain things which are good for England simply because there are different standards in this country.

A. No, I don't consider that western films should be shut out from India, because I think it has a broadening effect on the Indian mind to see western life.

Q. And do you agree that what is passed by the British Board of Censors should be accepted generally in this country unless there is communal or local politics?

A. Or any exaggeration of social life. I think night club life, etc., could be eliminated.

Q. Now would you not accept the British Board of Censors' decision as to what is a good representation of western national life? Are they not as much interested in it as we are here?

A. No, because I think we are dealing with a totally different audience to any western audience, and I think that has to be taken into account.

Q. But so far as standards of morality are concerned, do you think there are any great differences?

A. No but I think we are much more ostentatious in our sentiment than the eastern people are.

Q. But what is the harm in their seeing anything that you are ostentatious in exhibition? They see it in actual life. They see it in the dancing hall at Firpo's. They see it in the opera girls who come and play here. What is it that they see on the film that they do not see in actual life?

A. Because I don't think that in dramas you see on the stage you get the same representation that you do in the film. I think much more is taken for granted on the stage than on the film.

Q. You are thinking of drama. I am thinking of "The Black Bottom Revue". Do you think there is any difference between what you see on the stage in the matter of dress and what you see in the film?

A. I think there you get a very different audience. You get a more educated audience.

Q. But the educated youth goes there and has a chance of getting spoilt.

A. But I think the percentage of Indian youths who would go to "The Black Bottom Revue" would be infinitesimal. If you could do that, you would find that a great part of the audience is English.

Q. But if it is good for them?

A. We have a different outlook.

Q. Does the evidence show that it is good for the English audience? Why do you patronise such a thing and say "Shut it out for the Indian". You patronise it and you ask the Indian to shut his eyes to it?

A. No, I do not think so, because it is the adolescent Indian that forms a big percentage of the audience in the cinemas theatres and I should think he requires safeguarding that.

Q. You will prevent him from going to theatres where western girls come and dance in the way in which they do?

A. Yes, but where you have one such theatre you have hundreds of cinemas, do you not?

Q. As I have told you just now, it is only in cities that these social dramas appear on the screen. The Indian public, that is the masses, do not care for it. They care for serials and comics, in western films, and for Indian films. The social dramas where these things appear—they appear more or less where the west and the east combine to attend and where the west is more predominant than the east. You cannot deprive the European of his amusement. That is one branch of the difficulty. If you attempt that too much you may drive away the European from the cinema and deprive him of what he is accustomed to see in his own country?

A. But I think the European is driven away to a certain extent by the present type of pictures. Speaking personally, I know a very great number of my friends would only go to pictures which are above reproach.

*Q.* If that is the truth, the trade should have no difficulty in substituting Indian plays for social dramas?

*A.* No, I do not think so.

*Q.* You would leave the trade to judge in that matter?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* They are the best judges as to what class of audience they are likely to drive away, generally, by withdrawing those social dramas?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Would you agree to the proposition, as I put it to you already, that if the British Board of Censors pass certain dramas and certain scenes, that ought to be a general guidance for India also?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Unless there is something very objectionable in them on account of local conditions?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* And the sort of films you have in mind are objectionable from the point of view not only of the Indian but also of the European and the Anglo-Indian?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Now, may I ask you, has your association at any time complained to the Board of Censors about the nature of the films shown here?

*A.* No. I am afraid we have not dealt with that at all.

*Q.* In fact, may I take it you had bestowed no thought on this subject till this Committee's questionnaire came to you?

*A.* No, I do not think it was part of our work.

*Q.* Really if it was a point on which your association, which is working for the public welfare, felt very strongly, that harm was being done . . .

*Mrs. Basu:* I know in the Educational Conference last year the matter was referred to once.

*Q.* What happened?

*A.* It was mentioned that some sort of censorship should be introduced because of the bad effect it was having on adolescents, but I do not think it was a common complaint.

*Q.* It was simply mentioned and dropped?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* All that it comes to is this, that you do not want to ban such films?

*Dr. Coulson:* No, not at all.

*Q.* You do not want to ban either such scenes as love making scenes?

*A.* I do not think it is necessary.

*Q.* To come to particulars you do not want to ban kissing scenes altogether?

*Mrs. Basu:* What the council thought I believe was that it should not be made slow. It should only be a passing incident.

*Q.* In some cases they do it too long and too deep?

*Dr. Coulson:* Yes.

*Q.* You think such scenes might be avoided?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* It will please the European audience if that is done?

*A.* Avoid close-ups as much as possible. That is the main thing.

*Q.* I think you have not seen the rules of censorship which are guiding them at present? None of you have seen them?

*A.* No.

*Q.* That is what I find. Almost everybody complained that he or she has not acquainted himself or herself with the rules which now prevail as regards censorship?

*A.* I see the close-ups are still in evidence in the films.

*Q.* The close-ups are still in evidence everywhere. In England also it is in evidence very largely. How is it then that the English society does not revolt against it? May I put to you how the Indians view it. The thing is done in the west. It is not we who misrepresent them, but it is the westerner himself who represents himself or herself in that light, and why don't they tap the very source of mischief without coming here and asking to put a stop to it?

*A.* Because they are a totally different people.

*Q.* That is where they beg to differ, some of them. You think what is good for the west is not good for the east?

*A.* I do not think it is good for the west either, but it does not do so much harm as there as it does here.

*Q.* What is lurking in your mind? I wish to get that out.

*A.* We are differently brought up.

*Q.* So that, then, you must have one class of cinema for the westerner here and a different class of cinema for the easterner?

*A.* No. It would be a good idea to have them censored in England.

*Q.* Should not this agitation be more legitimate in England than here?

*A.* We are not in England at present, are we?

*Q.* That is the strength and weakness of the argument if I may so put it. We quite understand, what is bad for our country we must remove, but the argument, "We are western people and what is good for us is not good for you", is **not likely to appeal** to the country.

*A.* But then the French have a different standard of morals from the English, and films which could be shown in France without the slightest objection on the part of the French audiences may not be shown in England.

*Q.* Therefore whatever is passed by the British Board of Censors can be taken as a safe guide for us?

*Mr. Green:* The witness has given the opposite example of the difference between France and England. It does not follow that England and India should have the same standard. It is a logical point.

*Chairman:* I may put to you this. Here these people want to take advantage of their position being the ruling race and they think they can do anything with subject races and they want to protect themselves against any . . .

*Mr. Green:* I do not think it has been suggested by any member of the Committee.

*Chairman:* I do not say the members have suggested it.

*Dr. Coulson:* I have not suggested it either.

*Chairman:* I want to put to you plainly what the Indian psychology is in the matter. You agree then that there should not be different standards of morality although there may be different standards of etiquette?

*A.* I do not think it is fair to offend the Indian standard of etiquette by showing western films which may do so.

*Q.* But it is not the Indian who does it.

*A.* Indian proprietors order the pictures that come out.

*Q.* But who sends the picture?

*A.* It is the Indian proprietor who orders the picture.

*Mrs. Basu:* The difficulty has been this. The cinema first came to the country for the English audiences here and then Indians began going there, because they could not get cinemas of their own. Look at the Empire Theatre. A few Indians go there, but if you look at the theatres where Indian dramas are shown, you see Indians flocking to them. If we had our own cinemas representing our own life, we would prefer to go there. But because we do not have them in large numbers we are forced to go to the western pictures.

*Q.* Forced by circumstances. If you could substitute Indian films Indians would not care for the western shows?

*A.* No.

*Q.* So you will be for encouraging the growth of Indian films?

*A.* Yes. All these difficulties would be solved thereby. Those who wanted to see western life from the educational point of view or out of curiosity—they can go and see them in the western pictures. But what Dr. Coulson says is quite right. It has a baneful influence on our boys because they cannot see them in the proper light.

*Q.* You say in your memorandum, "We do not consider that western life is misrepresented, though exaggerated, but owing to the simple and severely moral ideas in India and the widely different outlook on home life and the relation between the sexes, western social life is widely misjudged." Misjudged by whom?

*Dr. Coulson:* By educated Indians.

*Mrs. Basu:* That is also my opinion.

*Q.* Is it your opinion that the Board of Censors should not be predominantly Indian?

*Dr. Coulson:* I do not think it is a fair question. I consider that the police should be represented on the Board for one, and I think that big commercial interests should be . . .

*Q.* What has commerce to do with this?

*A.* I think more industry films and others of a like nature ought to be produced.

*Q.* You mean industry should be represented or commerce should be represented?

*A.* Both together.

*Q.* You mean the film industry should be represented? Are you particular that the film industry should be represented on this Board?

*A.* I think they should have some representation on the Board itself.

*Q.* They will be the parties interested?

*A.* I do not think so. I also think that there should be some representatives of child welfare and other similar activities. We are not discriminating between the Indian and the European.

*Mrs. Basu:* As far as I could remember, what the Council wanted was that more non-official opinion, both European and Indian, representing both views, should be represented.

*Q.* You think that children should be prohibited from going to the cinemas?

*Dr. Coulson:* I do not think so. I do not think that a sufficiently large percentage go.

*Q.* I mean children under 12.

*A.* We are suggesting that if half price tickets at ordinary performances were eliminated, possibly children would only go to performances for children at half price.

*Q.* You are for abolishing half price tickets?

*A.* Yes, at ordinary performances.

*Q.* You think it will be some measure of protection against children going to the cinemas?

*A.* Yes.

*Mrs. Basu:* Some question was raised that children under 7 years of age should not be allowed to go.

*Q.* But you know the difficulty of Indian ladies. You would be driving them away from the cinemas if you prevent young children from going there. They have no home where they could leave their children behind and go and attend the cinema. Don't you recognise it is a practical difficulty?

*Mrs. Basu:* Yes.

*Q.* Then you will drive away the mothers also from the cinemas. Is it desirable? Probably the other suggestion of the abolition of half price



tickets might have some effect on the attendance of children. As it is, the percentage of children attending cinemas is very small apparently?

*Dr. Coulson:* I imagine so. I think very few attend.

*Q.* You say that Inspectors have not sufficient standing for the work entrusted to them. What do you suggest should be done?

*A.* We thought if we could choose men of higher social standing it would be better.

*Q.* You say that such and such interest should be represented on the Board. Is it your view that every member of the Board should see each film?

*A.* No. If they could get a quorum attending it should be sufficient.

*Q.* So you want every film to be examined?

*A.* Two or three members of the Board might see each doubtful film? What one would pass perhaps another would not.

*Q.* Or one man may reject what another man would pass. You think it is better that each film should be examined by two or more members of the Board itself?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* It is suggested that there is a practical difficulty about it, that you won't be able to find the requisite number of men or women to take up the job which may involve about 2 or 3 hours' work a day for at least 2 or 3 days in the week.

*A.* Any way I think you will find women in Calcutta to do it. Some of us are perfectly willing to do it.

*Q.* If women become censors and their voice gets predominant there is a risk of the cinema ceasing to be popular.

*A.* I do not think so. I think you will find the right type of woman is no more biassed than a man.

*Q.* With all respect I am telling you that there is that danger which may be apprehended.

*A.* I do not think so if you choose the right sort of person.

*Q.* Then you will have both modern women and conservative women on the Board?

*A.* Yes. I have no fear on that score. When one commences work one does not go with the idea of being unfair.

*Q.* I am not afraid of ladies being present on the Board. In the case of one film which I saw the lady gave a more forward opinion than I did!

*Mr. Green:* The Chairman spoke in one of his questions about English society. Do you regard English society as being one and indivisible?

*A.* No. There are all grades of society in England.

*Q.* And similarly in theatre audiences or cinema audiences one may make a clear distinction between an audience which will go and see an artistic play and an audience which will go and see a "Black Bottom Revue"?

*A.* That is what I was trying to bring out.

*Q.* I just wanted to bring out what was at the back of your mind. I take it you also get similar divisions in India among Indians?

*Mrs. Basu:* Oh, yes.

*Q.* The Chairman suggested that we might in India be well satisfied with a certificate of the British Board of Censors. He suggested that they would not pass anything that could possibly shock the audiences in England.

*Dr. Coulson:* I myself have seen films in England that I have not altogether approved of. It will depend upon the strictness of the Board.

*Q.* I want to connect that with the first question that I started with, the different types of audiences. Undoubtedly, I take it some audiences are less cultured or have much more vulgar tastes than others?

*A.* Yes.

**Q.** And I think you would admit that no censorship could set up so high a standard as to take away, may be, some of the vulgar amusement from the classes that demand it?

**A.** I believe in England there are different theatres in different suburbs catering for the varying tastes of their patrons. I think that the same could be said of Indian theatres and Indian audiences.

**Q.** Therefore would it be fair to say that the British Board of Censors necessarily approves, as a highly moral institution, of every film that it passes?

**A.** No. They have to take everything into consideration.

**Q.** They have to strike a line?

**A.** Yes, and it must be very hard to know where to strike it too.

**Q.** I think that difficulty is more pronounced in this country than in England?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** I just want to get to another point. You apparently do not wish to hitch your wagon to a star, you do not want every film that you may not altogether like, to be banned?

**A.** No. I should say there are tastes and tastes.

**Q.** May I put this question to you? Is it your view that this kind of film that many of us do not like is harmful not from any point of view of British prestige, but it is harmful because of the effect on the Indian?

**A.** I think that many of the passionate love scenes which may be quite permissible with English audiences are harmful to the Indian youths, and the only way one can prevent it is to have Indian films.

**Q.** I am coming to that in a minute. There is one other way in which you may help, and that is the one which the Chairman has already suggested, namely, that if more Indians were on the Board of Censors they would probably censor more rigorously than Englishmen?

**Mrs. Basu:** Yes.

**Q.** That is a consummation you would like to see?

**A.** Yes.

**Dr. Coulson:** All Indians would agree with you.

**Q.** Shall I put this way, if as you advocate, every film should be seen by at least two members of the Board of Censors, it would be a good thing if one of these were always an Indian?

**Dr. Coulson:** I think it would be a good thing.

**Q.** Your point about developing the Indian film industry, we have had considerable evidence that the industry is developing; not only that, but that Indian films are more popular with Indian audiences than western films,—with the generality of Indian audiences. There may be certain Europe returned Indians, highly educated ladies and gentlemen, who are not content with some of the crude Indian films, and they do want to see western films.

**Mrs. Basu:** I think it is the business of Government to have an institution or to encourage an institution which would really set about improving the Indian film from the beginning and put it on the right lines instead of going through these crude stages and leaving it to amateurs to experiment. I know some of those who are really doing these amateur films, such as "The Light of Asia" and others—they are absolutely untrained. They are doing their best, but at the same time unless you really have an institution here you cannot attract the educated section. I am sure if you have such an institution you will attract many Indian youths to that institution who would like to specialise in film acting and film industry.

**Q.** You do think that Government can legitimately try and assist the Indian industry?

**A.** Yes.

*Q.* I do not expect you have thought out the different ways in which it should be done, but if this Committee could recommend Government assistance in some shape or other you would welcome it?

*A.* Yes.

*Colonel J. D. Crawford:* Most of my questions have been answered and there are only one or two. I take it you consider that things shown on the film have to be greatly exaggerated, more than in the picture book or the novel?

*Dr. Coulson:* Yes, because there is no talking, it is purely acting and nothing else.

*Q.* You said you thought the effect of the films in India will be generally good to the people, but when you used the word "generally" you appear to have some reservation in your mind. You are not completely satisfied with the standard of the stories or some of them?

*A.* I think a greater use could be made of historical novels.

*Q.* Can you give any idea of what particular scenes you would like to see cut out from the films shown to-day?

*A.* I would mention all passionate love scenes. They are unnecessary.

*Q.* Would you like us to suggest that we should call on the Censor Boards to exclude passionate love scenes being shown on the screen?

*A.* I do not think that would be feasible, but I imagine they could keep a more critical eye on them.

*Q.* May I ask you whether you think the advanced sex customs of the west are offensive to Indian audiences? Are the scenes depicted on the screen in the west offensive to Indian ladies?

*Mrs. Basu:* I do not think so. As far as Indian ladies are concerned those who would understand it are advanced enough to understand it in its proper light, and in the case of those who do not understand it, they do not understand anything there at all.

*Q.* It has no effect at all?

*A.* They cannot draw a line between advanced and not advanced sex problems. Sex life is so different here.

*Q.* Is the display of western scenes of life on the film having any influence on the sex life in India?

*A.* I do not know. So far as the youth is concerned I think it might be having a little effect.

*Q.* Do you object to that?

*A.* In a way I do object to sex problems in the west being shown to our boys, because those problems do not arise here and why should we be bothered with those problems at all here?

*Q.* As regards children we have been told in evidence that some mothers if they want to see pictures have to take their little children with them, even babies in arms. Am I right in thinking that the cinema is rather strong meat for children? The whole of the incidents so exaggeratedly displayed, scenes of brutality and things of that sort are likely to have a harmful effect on children?

*Dr. Coulson:* What age are you thinking of?

*Q.* Up to, say, 10.

*A.* I daresay a lot of juvenile crime might be caused by such scenes but if the child is very small, he has absolutely no interest except in a funny man or a horse.

*Q.* A lady in Lucknow the other day said she had had to remove her children from the cinema because the torturing of Jackie Coogan got so much on their minds that they were immensely disturbed by it, showing to my mind that the children follow these things much more than perhaps we grown ups do.

A. I think they probably do. Everything is realistic to them whereas we know it is all make-believe.

Q. Is there any necessity for us to take that point of view into consideration?

A. I think we can. But once again a Western audience shows 25 per cent. of children. Here you are not dealing with anything like that amount. The people that are being influenced are the adolescent youth.

Q. You don't think we need worry about children.

A. I don't think they form more than 10 per cent. of our audiences.

Q. You would not even worry about that 10 per cent. I don't want to press you to say you should worry. I am trying to find out what you think about it.

A. It is very difficult. As Mrs. Basu says, the mothers would have to stay away.

Q. A way out would be to have special performances for children.

A. That is what I was going to suggest—special afternoon performances for children and to try to encourage mothers to go to them.

Q. You do feel at bottom that for very young children the films are strong meat?

A. Yes, I do.

Mr. Coatsman: I suppose you know that from the point of view of the Western producer, whether in Europe or America, the Indian market is a very small affair.

A. I am quite sure of it.

Q. And that therefore you cannot expect a Western producer to produce pictures specially for the Indian market or with a special eye to Indian requirements.

A. I don't think so.

Q. So the trouble that you find arising from the exhibition of Western films in this country is a fundamental trouble?

A. Yes but then I do think they can get Mary Pickford pictures that are both attractive and are absolutely harmless to anybody. Exhibitors should be more selective in their programmes.

Q. That raises another question. You see a Mary Pickford film or a Douglas Fairbank film is one of the so-called Super films which can only be purchased and shown rarely in this country. There must be a lot of the ordinary pictures to one of these Super films. So merely tightening up the censorship cannot affect the supply of films at its source?

A. No I don't think it will affect the films of the West at all.

Q. Would you agree then that the real solution is to be found in increasing the production of Indian films.

A. Also in getting Indian proprietors to be more selective in the films they order. They are only getting a small proportion of films produced every year and this small proportion should be of the right sort.

Q. Isn't it all again bound up with all this question of "blind" booking and "block" booking. You see the Indian exhibitor may or may not be a free agent. I think though your chief concern is for the adolescent.

A. Yes, I think he is our chief concern.

Q. And you would agree that it is very rarely or, we might even say never, that a film shown in this country contains any sheer indecency.

A. Very rarely.

Q. Your trouble is that the Indian adolescent is introduced suddenly and by this peculiar medium of the film to customs and habits which are foreign to him and that these customs and habits, because of the queer medium in which the producer is working, have to be exaggerated.

A. Yes.

*Q.* For example a play like "Sweet Lavender" could not be put on the film without a lot of exaggeration.

*A.* Yes it would be impossible to film that without exaggeration.

*Q.* That is the real trouble, it is slightly touched up here, exaggerated there and so on. Can you remember the name of any film to which you yourself have taken strong exception—I do not mean just a general feeling but strong objection.

*A.* We have complained against certain posters and pamphlets. I myself have received pamphlets from the theatres here that have been perfectly impossible, and have been sent through to the Censorship Board. Occasionally we have sent pamphlets.

*Q.* Are the pamphlets printed abroad?

*A.* Printed here, apparently. They have been distributed in picture houses here.

*Q.* You cannot tell us whether they were printed here or abroad?

*A.* No.

*Q.* I think the handbills are printed here. Now you sent these pamphlets to the Censorship Board?

*A.* Yes we sent them to Mrs. Stanley, who is, I believe, on the Censorship Board.

*Q.* Is that recently?

*A.* I know one has gone in recently and there were 2 or 3 before.

*Q.* Do you find many of your young Indian friends, both male and female, who are for the introduction of certain Western ways, dancing, etc.

*Mrs. Basu:* A very few England-returned young people. I mean the minority is so small that one cannot possibly say that it fairly represents the educated Indian youth of the country. I know that we certainly don't want the dance to be introduced in Indian society on Western lines, but I think there are some Indian youths who do want it.

*Q.* Do you know any among your personal acquaintance?

*A.* Yes I do.

*Q.* Have their views been at all affected by the cinema?

*A.* I do not think their views have been affected by the cinema.

*Q.* Do you think the cinema is likely to affect the rising generation in any of those ways?

*A.* I do think the cinema is likely to affect the rising generation in the matter of social customs and so on.

*Mr. Neogy:* Yours is a social organisation. Has it anything to do with politics?

*Mrs. Coulson:* Nothing whatever.

*Q.* I was therefore rather surprised to find in your written statement that you say that "sex films, crime films, mob violence films and those derogatory to British prestige are harmful to adolescents". How can any film by the mere fact of its being derogatory to British prestige be in any way harmful to adolescents?

*A.* Also Mrs. Basu did not see these notes before they were sent in and disagrees with this statement.

*Q.* So may I take it that your considered opinion is that politics should not influence the censorship authorities in any way?

*A.* I do not know. It is very hard to answer. How are you going to define politics.

*Q.* Well any kind of politics.

*A.* I don't think that communal riots should be shown. Do they come under politics?

*Chairman:* Let me give a concrete instance. Supposing a sub-title reads "Better die in liberty than live as a slave nation" in a Western film which

was going to be shown and the Censor orders the Exhibitor to omit the words "in liberty". Well, what is your view of the matter?

A. Speaking for the European element I consider the Censors perfectly right. The Indian element you will probably find does not think so.

Mr. Neogy: So there is a difference of opinion.

A. That was written with Mrs. MacPherson's knowledge. The Indian ladies object to it.

Q. They wouldn't mind such a title, whereas you would?

Mrs. Basu: What is wrong is this. They objected to it because the cinema shown was a cinema which showed the West in a very bad light.

Mrs. Coulson: Yes, I think that is why we objected. It was about Red Indians and Americans.

Chairman: I just now put you a concrete instance in which you said you yourself would omit the words "in liberty".

Mrs. Coulson: Will you repeat that?

Q. "Better die in liberty rather than serve someone else". Some Western film contained such a sub-title. I can give you the exact words presently.

Mr. Neogy: Here is a title in a foreign film "Dreamed of a day when the government would be a government of the people, by the people, for the people" and this has been ordered to be substituted by "Dreamed of a day when peace and contentment would prevail in the land".

Chairman: That is too much for her.

Mr. Neogy: Then here is another. Omit the title "My poor brother's only sin was to love his native land". Would you approve of it.

A. I should like to see the film first to see what it was about.

Chairman: This is the point I had in mind. "In a sub-title "My sons, die in freedom rather than live in Sivaji's service!" the words "in freedom" should be cut out".

A. I think it was unnecessary to have it in here. We are endeavouring to stop communal strife between Hindus and Muhammadans.

Chairman: It has nothing to do with Hindus and Muhammadans.

Mr. Neogy: There is no objection to dying; the objection is to dying in freedom!

A. I am not sure that I do not agree with that. In any case I would like to see the picture first.

Q. Evidently there is a difference between the Indian members and the European members.

A. There would be naturally.

Q. And I take it that the attitude of the European members is this, that Western life should be shown only in a favourable light in India?

A. Yes.

Chairman: And any bad parts should not be shown.

A. I do not think that is necessary; but again I do not think they are necessary anywhere. I am not differentiating India from anywhere else.

Mr. Neogy: Now you have given your testimony that Western life is not misrepresented in pictures nowadays.

A. We think it is exaggerated.

Q. Though it is exaggerated. Don't you think a certain amount of exaggeration is necessary in order to make a subject interesting?

A. To make a film. That is what I have said.

Q. Even a romance or a drama requires a certain amount of exaggeration.

A. But not to the extent that films require it. The mere humdrum matter of fact life would hardly attract.

A. But what we tried to bring out is that in film making they have to exaggerate more than in a play or a novel because there are no written words or spoken words to explain the action.

**Q.** You have to make up for the deficiency in that respect?

**A.** Therefore it needs more censoring than other things do.

**Q.** Exaggeration is more or less essential in a film from that point of view?

**A.** Apparently.

**Q.** Simply because a particular aspect of life is exaggerated, it does not follow that it is objectionable. In so far as exaggeration is essential for the purpose of film manufacture . . . .

**A.** But, as **Mrs. Basu** pointed out, it is the fact that your standpoint is different from ours. That makes it more objectionable.

**Q.** Customs and habits differ certainly, and particularly those who hold very orthodox views are likely to be shocked by certain things. That is your view, I take it?

**A.** That is **Mrs. Basu's** view. Where the Indian aspect comes in it is for her to speak.

**Q.** Quite and there are people in this land who will be shocked to see ladies riding or the European ladies' lack of dress and the freedom between the sexes which they can see in the streets of Calcutta.

**Mrs. Basu:** Quite right. That is why I say as far as possible develop the cinema on our own lines.

**Q.** People are likely to be shocked when they see this sort of thing for the first time but they gradually get accustomed to it. You don't mind seeing ladies going about in their present mode of dress?

**Mrs. Coulson:** It is no use my minding; it is the fashion.

**Q.** Isn't the remedy to allow people to get accustomed even in the cinema to such things?

**A.** That might be a remedy.

**Q.** In so far as the cinema does not misrepresent.

**Chairman:** But if it does harm to Indians?

**A.** That was our argument; we considered it does do harm.

**Mr. Neogy:** If it does harm, that is another matter. You would object to "The Black Bottom Revue" being seen by Indians?

**A.** There is only one theatre where it is being shown and there is no likelihood of Indians being there in any large numbers.

**Q.** But you would object to a film being shown of "The Black Bottom Revue"?

**A.** Yes because it will be shown to hundreds whereas only a few people can see it at present.

**Q.** I don't know if you are aware that variety performances, including such things as "The Black Bottom Revue", are permissible to be shown in every cinema theatre; and variety performances, including ballet dancing, are occasionally given in connection with Indian cinema theatres. Is it your proposal to prohibit that sort of dancing at cinemas.

**A.** I have never really thought of it.

**Q.** Well this particular troupe which is giving a show at the present moment in the Empire Theatre here could be made to give its shows in any cinema theatre.

**A.** But how many theatres in the Northern part could afford to have an English ballet company?

**Q.** I know a very small theatre in Southern Calcutta who had it in the past.

**A.** I was talking of the Northern part.

**Q.** The predecessor of the Purna theatre used to give ballet dancing exhibitions very frequently in connection with their cinema shows. How are you going to prevent that?

**Chairman:** Left to her, she would prevent everything.

**Mr. Neogy:** I see!

**Written Statement of Miss MARGARET G. ARBUTHNOT, Secretary, Society for the Protection of Children in India, dated the 1st December 1927.**

**GENERAL.**

1. I have no special knowledge of the Cinema Industry, but have about 20 years' experience in dealing with children and young people in Egypt, England, and India.

Since January, 1925, I have lived in Calcutta as Secretary of the Society for the Protection of Children in India, a Society which is concerned with the welfare of children of every race and creed.

It is affiliated to the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children in England. Its first object is "to prevent the public and private wrongs of children and the corruption of their morals".

2. (a) In Calcutta, Indians of both educated and illiterate classes, frequent Cinemas in large number.

The cheap seats always seem full.

**PART II.**

24. (a) Western life is often depicted in a manner that conveys a wrong impression to Eastern eyes.

25. Yes.

29. Yes.

30. I suggest that no children 14 should be admitted to film passed "For Adults Only", and that half-price tickets for children should be issued only for children's Performances.

I suggest that at least one Central Cinema should provide a "Children's Afternoon" once a week, of slightly shorter duration than the average performance and beginning at 4 p.m., for the convenience of school children: preferably on Wednesdays and Thursdays, to avoid interference with school games and visitors. It might include a short film that would be both instructive and attractive.

32. I suggest that the interests of children and young persons should have adequate representation on the Board of Censors, by a responsible and broad-minded woman.

40. I consider that posters in particular should be censored.

**Oral Evidence of Miss MARGARET G. ARBUTHNOT.**

*Chairman:* What is your advice about children; do you want to prohibit them altogether.

A. I think I would not penalise them but I would have no half price except for children's performances. People would then find someone to take care of their children.

Q. You would not penalise them but you would prevent half prices except at children's performances?

A. Yes; and posters ought to be censored.

*Mr. Green:* Your suggestion about a children's afternoon is a very estimable suggestion; but how can you induce cinema owners to co-operate? Do you think anything could be done by schools and associations to guarantee a certain audience?

A. It is very very difficult to guarantee a large proportion of children.

Q. We are of course in sympathy with the proposal.



A. Well the experiment might be tried and if there is no half price except at these shows, the children would probably come.

Q. Have you even approached Madans with a view to making that suggestion?

A. The films need not be purely children's films. There are so many very good films.

Q. Would you admit all children?

A. I would try to bar very young children, children of tender age?

Q. Up to what age?

A. Say 7. One woman I know hardly ever missed the half-past six show and always takes her little girl of under 4 years old.

Q. Was this mother an Anglo-Indian?

A. No, a European, not of good class.

Q. Do you know many such cases?

A. Not many but there are a certain number.

**Written Statement of Dr. J. WALKER TOMB, O.B.E., M.A., M.D.,  
D.P.H., Chief Sanitary Officer, Asansol Mines Board of Health.**

*Note on the use of Magic Lanterns in Public Health Propaganda within the  
Asansol Mining Settlement.*

The Asansol Mining Settlement which is known in commercial circles as the Raniganj Coal Field is situated in the Sub-division of Asansol in the district of Burdwan lying within and being coterminous with the two western "Police Thanas" (i.e., Raniganj and Asansol) of the Asansol Sub-division. It lies 120-140 miles west of Calcutta on the main line between Calcutta and Delhi and is 413 square miles in area, with a population of 329,353 (according to the census of 1921) to which should be added an estimated floating mining population of approximately 100,000. Within the Settlement are contained 263 collieries and 490 villages as well as the two Municipalities of Asansol (Pop. 26,499) and Raniganj (Pop. 14,536). Owing to frequent outbreaks of cholera and small-pox in this area the Government of Bengal in 1912 at the request of the coal industry passed the Bengal Mining Settlements Act for the "prevention and suppression of dangerous epidemic disease", the Asansol Mines Board of Health being brought into active existence in 1916, when I became its first Medical Officer of Health.

For administrative purposes the Mining Settlement is divided into six inspection circles of approximately 70 square miles each with a qualified Sanitary Inspector stationed in each. Each Sanitary Inspector is provided with an acetylene magic lantern and a series of suitable slides dealing with the more important aspects of his work. Throughout the year but particularly when either cholera or small-pox is epidemic the Sanitary Inspectors give lectures illustrated with appropriate lantern slides to the residents of the villages and collieries within their circles on the prevention and suppression of epidemic and other diseases. These lectures have been found to be invaluable as a means of public health propaganda since even the lowest intelligence is able to comprehend a simple lecture when illustrated with appropriate slides. I am of the opinion that suitable cinematograph films would be still more efficacious for the furtherance of public health propaganda but the scarcity of suitable films as well as their cost make this impossible at present. I would suggest that the Public Health Department of each Provincial Government in India should undertake the preparation of films dealing with the particular public health problems of each province a grant-in-aid being made for this purpose if necessary to each Provincial Government by the Government of India.

**Oral Evidence of Dr. J. WALKER TOMB, O.B.E., M.A., M.D.,  
D.P.H., Chief Sanitary Officer, Asansol Mines Board of Health,  
on Tuesday, the 20th December 1927.**

*Chairman:* Dr. Tomb, you believe that the cinema will be an effective method of imparting instruction in general matters of utility to the public?

A. I do.

Q. In fact in the Asansol Mining Settlement I see you are now using magic lanterns for want of a cinema?

A. Yes.

Q. If you had cinema films you could do your propaganda work more effectively?

A. Yes, I think so.

Q. And you think the Government ought to encourage the production of such films or produce them themselves?

A. They should probably encourage the production of such films.

Q. You would not have the Government themselves producing such public utility films?

A. Possibly with the help of the Directors of Public Health.

Q. What we have in mind is not only public health films but industrial films, educational films and so on?

A. In that case it might be better for Government to subsidise the production of such films rather than to make them themselves, whichever method should prove from experience to be the better.

Q. Anyway you think the production of such films would be a great asset in mass education?

A. I do.

Q. And you would advocate the spending of public funds in that behalf?

A. Most certainly.

*Mr. Neogy:* Only one point. Do you think the problems of different provinces are likely to differ?

A. In purely medical matters, yes. Kala-azar is confined to certain provinces therefore it would be a waste of effort to show kala-azar films all over India.

Q. In order to make a successful appeal these films should have a provincial setting?

A. Yes, in most cases I should think so.

Q. It won't do to have a sort of standard film for the whole of India?

A. Perhaps a standard film would suffice for small-pox and malaria, but for kala-azar provincial films would be necessary as this disease is at present confined to certain provinces.

Q. We have been told that having regard to the state of education of the audiences for which you are going to cater, unless you have a provincial setting, provincial dress, provincial features, etc., reproduced, the people would find it difficult to follow?

A. That is so, but it might be possible in films dealing with subjects such as small-pox and malaria not to go to the expense of having different films for different provinces.

*Mr. Green:* We were told by one officer of considerable educational experience that he did not believe that the moving picture could be grasped by the illiterate. His point was that he tried them with still pictures and found they were extraordinarily slow in grasping their meaning. Your experience is that they can and do appreciate such pictures.

A. They appreciate magic lantern pictures provided that the points which the picture are intended to illustrate are explained to them. A series of magic lantern slides shown by themselves and not as illustrations to a lecture

would be difficult for any one to understand. I have no experience of educational moving pictures but as the general level of intelligence of the spectators in a cinema theatre is not high I should think that the intelligence which grasps the story in an ordinary film would be able to grasp that in an educational or propaganda film.

Q. Have you seen an Indian audience in cinemas in this country?

A. I cannot say that I have.

Q. Or any of the railway free cinematograph shows?

A. No.

Q. But you are satisfied from your personal experience of the magic lantern that the audience can grasp its meaning when used to illustrate a lecture and would argue that a cinema film with a picture which is shown for a sufficient length of time would be analogous to a magic lantern slide and be better, more lifelike and of greater use in public propaganda?

A. I would argue so particularly if the cinematograph films be used to illustrate lectures.

Q. The majority of opinion is strongly with you that moving pictures are more readily understood than still pictures.

A. I take it that depends to some extent on the rate at which the picture is shown. Where it is shown quickly I know from personal experience that it is sometimes somewhat difficult to follow.

Q. It is not lifelike when the picture is shown too fast?

A. It is not only not lifelike but some films are shown so quickly that one cannot grasp their significance or meaning. That however is a technical point.

Q. And therefore for any propaganda films you would be careful in their preparation to stress special points.

A. I should suggest that experiments might be made to ascertain the rate at which an illiterate village audience can grasp the shifting of the scene from one point to another. That could be easily done.

Q. You don't anticipate any difficulty?

A. No.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* Do you know anything about the films produced by the Government of the United Provinces on Cholera, Small-pox and other Public Health subjects?

A. I have heard of them but have not seen them.

Q. Are you willing to try them in the Asansol Mining Settlement?

A. Yes, with the greatest pleasure.

Q. Will you write to the United Provinces Government and request them to lend these to you?

A. I should be quite willing to do so.

### **Written Statement of Dr. M. P. WEST, M.A., D.Ph. (Oxon.), Principal, Teachers' Training College, Dacca.**

1. The Bengalis of all classes read far less than European peoples and generally get far less imaginative stimulus in their lives. Only about 167 novels are published per annum in Bengal. There is only one "Story magazine," a very inferior production, circulating partly in this province and partly in Madras. Popular journalism other than newspapers is almost nil.

The Bengali has an intense interest in the drama and in acting. About 58 plays are published per annum or one play for every three novels—a very remarkable proportion.

It follows that the cinema is a relatively far more important influence in the lives of the people here than it is in Europe, where there are many other counter-influences; and it is likely to become still more important.

(a) It is therefore all the more important that the cinema should not be a bad influence.

(b) It is desirable that active steps should be taken to encourage the industry as a valuable stimulus to the imagination and intelligence of the people.

2. The present system of censorship appears to be rather particular than general: it will pass a film which, though no one detail can be taken hold of, is obviously objectionable in its general tone and purpose. The censor should rather be the sensible literary critics who can appreciate the moral and artistic effect of the film as a whole, than the policeman or lawyer.

And the law should be so framed that a film may be excluded as generally detrimental in its purpose in their detailed criticism.

3. Purely negative censorship cannot however do very much to make the cinema an actual instrument of education; for the censor could never exclude a film merely on the grounds that it is crude and vulgar and inartistic.

The Censorship Board (or a special Sub-Committee of it) could however classify films as A and B, the A grade films being such as are likely to produce a positively beneficial effect on the minds of the spectators—viz., good stories produced in good taste.

The same Committee might also select Educational Film, that is films of a definitely instructive nature, such as those of the Empire Publicity Board, and Instructional Films, Ltd.

4. I suggest that a part of the entertainments tax should be remitted to such houses as contract.

(a) to exhibit none but A grade films throughout the year.

(b) to include one Educational film in every programme.

5. I suggest that actual help might be given by Municipalities or by Government or both in the establishment of A grade cinemas in mofassil places which are not served at present.

If the work of the Committee in selecting A grade films is carried out in a sensible and not too high-brow manner, and if the remission of tax is reasonably generous, it will very soon *not pay* to bring B grade films to India. This will be a far more effective censorship than one of mere prohibition and fines.

#### *Indian representation in the Cinema Board.*

Certain Indian customs are offensive to European ideas.—but we have to get used to them, and realise that they are a part of different code of manners from our own. Similarly certain European customs are offensive to Indian ideas, but if the Indian is to enter at all into European literature or drama, he must get used to them. Thus Kissing is considered indecent by the Bengali: the Censorship Board cannot exclude a film on the ground that there is a kiss in it (though certain "close-ups" might be objected to).

While Indian representation is very valuable and necessary, it must be tempered by other opinions.

#### *The Buttersea System.*

The primary school children are too young, and in the high school it is impossible to separate those who can and those who cannot afford to pay normal rates. I do not therefore consider that any public money should be spent on the system. But, if a sufficient audience could be obtained it would pay the cinemas to give a performance at greatly reduced rates out of ordinary hours when the house would normally be lying empty.

The Education Department could organize the selling of tickets, and I think that the plan would be popular. (The Indian per cent. loves getting things at "bargain" price).

#### *Cinemas in Schools and Colleges.*

It was the general opinion of the last two Imperial Education Conferences that the cinema, as a permanent installation in a school or college, is not worth the cost. I agree with this opinion.

**Oral Evidence of Dr. MICHAEL WEST, M.A., D.Ph. (Oxon.),  
Principal, Teachers' Training College, Dacca, on Wednesday, the  
21st December 1927.**

*Chairman:* Dr. West, you are the principal of the Teachers' Training College, Dacca?

A. Yes.

Q. How long have you been there?

A. I have been in India for about 13 years, and in Dacca since 1920.

Q. Are there any cinema shows in Dacca?

A. Yes, there are two.

Q. Are they run by two different people?

A. I think they are independent shows.

Q. Have you got much of an European population there?

A. It varies between 50 and 100.

Q. Is there a large Anglo-Indian population?

A. There is a small railway settlement.

Q. Do you go to the cinema often in Dacca?

A. More often lately since it has become a little better.

Q. What do you mean by saying since it has become a little better?

A. Originally there was only one theatre and it was very dirty, but now there is a second cinema and it is more comfortable. Europeans go there more often.

Q. In the new theatre you refer to I suppose they show only western films?

A. They occasionally show Indian films in both, but not very often.

Q. Do you show Indian films more often in the old one?

A. They are both about the same.

Q. Have you seen Indian films yourself?

A. I have seen them, but not many.

Q. Where in Calcutta or in Dacca?

A. I saw one in Bombay and one in Dacca. I remember only two.

Q. Was it the Light of Asia or the Life of Buddha that you saw in Bombay?

A. I don't remember what it was. The one that I saw in Dacca was I think Rama and Sita, but I don't remember exactly what the other was.

Q. Was the attendance very large when that Indian film was shown in Dacca?

A. I should not say it was crowded, but I could not be very certain it was a long time ago. But it was a poor film, and I made a mental note of it not to go and see any more such.

Q. Were there Bengali captions on the film?

A. I think there were Bengali and Hindi captions on it.

Q. Do the western films shown in Dacca contain vernacular captions?

A. Not as a rule.

Q. Are the cinemas well attended in Dacca?

A. They are getting more popular. There is distinctly an upward tendency, and I think there is a likelihood of a third cinema being started fairly soon.

Q. What is the population of Dacca?

A. I could not tell you that.

*Mr. Neogy:* It is a lakh and twenty thousand.

*Chairman:* You said that you began to go more often to the cinema on account of the improved conditions in the new theatre which has just sprung up. Do you notice any tendency in the films to show a better tone now-a-days or they are in the same state?

A. I don't think there is any marked difference in the quality of the films.

Q. Do your students go to the cinemas there?

A. Our students are mostly of the schoolmaster class, and they are rather elderly. The younger of our students go.

Q. What sort of western films are more frequently shown, action films, serials or what?

A. The programme is very much the same as one gets in Calcutta. There will usually be something really good coming along once a month and in between they show Indian films, comics, etc. Sometimes films which are practically unintelligible to an Indian audience like Harold Lloyd in "The Freshman" are also shown.

Q. What would you call a very good film?

A. If it is produced by a man who has obviously good taste and has a good story; and if it is well acted, I should call it a good film. Sometimes one sees a good film, but it is obviously produced by a person without taste, and, although it is a good story and has got all the makings of a good film, yet there is something wrong in the mind of the producer.

Q. Generally, you think the film has a good influence on the public?

A. I think it is a tremendous opportunity missed. The Bengali as I have said in my note, reads far less than European students and generally get far less imaginative stimulus in his life. He does not read English novels to any marked extent. I think the majority of the university students read one or perhaps two novels a year. If I ask them to tell me the latest novel they have read, in most cases they mention some textbook which they have studied for the intermediate. Consequently, the only contact they can get with world life is through the cinema. The educational authorities and the Calcutta University are doing a little to encourage reading among the students, but it will take a long time to produce a novel reading public. There is no story Magazine in Bengal. On the other hand, they do go to the cinema, and if they are encouraged a little more, they would go more frequently. But at the present time the films that are shown are unselected and they are not of much educative value to the student world. To my mind, therefore, the films need not negative censorship by a policeman, but positive censorship which will pick out the best films and encourage cinema houses to show them.

Q. Do you think it will be a commercial proposition for the trade?

A. I think you might make some sort of concession on the entertainment tax to any house which contracts to show only A grade films and one educational film in every programme. Then a Sub-Committee could be formed which would not simply examine, simply looking for what is wrong in a film, but looking out for what is the best film.

Q. Who is to produce the best films? How many in a hundred would you pass as good in every way?

A. They are being produced now; there is certainly a sufficient supply of good films in London.

Q. Where do they get them from? You know that 90 per cent. of the films shown in England to-day come from America?

A. Some American films are extremely good.

Q. England cannot certainly live by producing only good films?

A. It would pay the producers if they were to bring out high class films.

Q. That means more money to the exhibitor. If he is to exhibit only A class films, he will have to spend more money and the audience will have to pay more, and the exhibitor will have to increase his prices?

A. That is why I suggest some concession might be given in taxation to those who are willing to show A class films and some educational films on their programmes.

Q. Do you think the public are so critical that they will only select A class films?

A. I think the Indian public has a certain amount of natural taste and they do prefer a better class film.

Q. I suppose you know that ordinarily the pleader class, the merchant class and elderly class of people seldom go to cinemas?

A. Yes.

Q. I suppose it is to them you have to look for the judgment?

A. The student class too will appreciate good films.

Q. Can they afford to pay more than they do now? If you leave it to the trade it won't be a paying proposition, and the State will have to run amusement shows?

A. As I said, if some concessions are given to the producers in tax, they might be able to produce a better class of film, it would give them a stimulus to produce a better class of pictures.

Q. They have to import from the same source. The difference in the price of a good film and of an ordinary film is so large that it won't pay the exhibitors if they show only A class films?

A. If they get a concession in the tax they might be able to produce a better class of picture. I merely want to alter the attitude of the Censorship Board, so that they can say, that such and such a film is a good film while such and such a picture is not so good. If they say that a certain film is not to be shown in India, they will have to show cause before it is finally rejected, but no one can criticise them for saying that a certain film is a good one while the other is an inferior one. It might be an A class film, though not a super production. My point is, instead of having the policeman on the Censorship Committee you should have more literary critics on it.

Q. I suppose you recognise that the film is more for amusement than for enlightenment?

A. I would not agree there. That is not so in this country. I think in England the cinema is used more for amusement; for people read more in England and have other sources of information. Here people read so little.

Q. You cannot expect other countries to produce films which you want, because there they cater more for amusement than for enlightenment?

A. Taking the sum total of the world's production, I imagine there will be enough films which will amply supply India, and all that we need do is to pick out those films so that the cinemas may have a proper guide. If a House wants to produce decent films, let it do so.

Q. Then you want a central authority to classify the films?

A. It seems to me to be less invidious to classify films than to pass and reject them.

Q. You want the Central authority to give certificates. I can understand the difference between educational and non-educational films. That is easily done. But to classify films would be a difficult question, because the moral tone of a film may be good but the technique of it may not be quite so good, although it may not be objectionable. I mean on the whole it will be a difficult matter, don't you think so?

A. It is a question really of literary criticism.

Q. You mean art criticism, is it not?

A. The point that the censors have to bear in mind is, not "Is a particular film going to do harm to anybody," but "Is it going to add to the intellectual life of those who see it?"

*Q.* It is a very difficult function you want to throw on the Censorship Board. If I were on the Board as an ordinary man, I would hesitate to accept a membership under such conditions. I dare say professors like you might be able to classify those things, but I suppose you do want the censorship Board to be composed of professors?

*A.* I suggested that this function should be exercised not by the whole Board, but rather by a sub-committee of the Board. After all, if a cinema house does not want to observe this differentiation, it won't do them any harm, but they would get some concession if they do so, and it would be some sort of guide.

*Q.* There is also another practical danger which might arise if such a power were given to the Central Board, the abuse of it; there might be partiality shown for one's own country?

*A.* That would depend on the constitution of the Board.

*Q.* At any rate, it would be open to that charge, it is a very difficult function you want to throw on the Board?

*A.* I do feel that it is important that the cinema should be so used.

*Q.* I quite see your point of view. But don't you think that the remedy lies in using the cinema to enlighten the youth of this country? For that purpose, it seems to me the more obvious remedy is to produce suitable films in this country such as the ones you have in mind?

*A.* The object is to put some ideas into the minds of the youth of this country, but I don't think for a long time to come India will be able to produce such fine films as we get from foreign countries.

*Q.* Why not? It is only a question of training people, and it should not take very long.

*A.* Take the enormous large scale productions. I should say that the *Lost World* and that type of film is distinctly educational, but I should have thought that India would take a very long time to produce such films. But there are certain films which India could produce much better like "*Kim*" for instance. They could produce it much better here than Americans could if of course they were given the experts to guide them. Scott's *Antarctic Expedition*, "*Ben Hur*," pictures of voyages and travels are of great educational value if they are well produced.

*Q.* You would advocate that Government should give subsidies to such theatres which show only A class films.

*A.* I think they might come to some sort of financial arrangement, and I think also that in a place like Calcutta you could have the Patterson system for school children.

*Q.* What is your idea about producing Indian films? Don't you think they should be produced in larger numbers?

*A.* I think there are enormous opportunities for producing Indian subjects, but I don't know to what extent facilities exist for producing them.

*Q.* You mean there is enormous material in the country?

*A.* Yes, but judging from the films I have seen, it would be difficult to produce a film dealing with an Indian subject which would also appeal to an English audience, so that the films could be marketed outside.

*Q.* Don't you think the primary object should be to find a market for the Indian production in India alone first, which is a very wide field?

*A.* Yes, but if a film like "*Kim*" is well produced it is sure to find a wide market outside India, and it would any day draw an English audience.

*Q.* But not an Indian film?

*A.* I don't see why an Indian film if well produced should not draw an English audience.

*Q.* Do you think the ordinary Indian trader, the merchant class or the middle classes, are going to be drawn to "*Kim*" if it is produced here?



A. I should think so.

Q. Even the ordinary social drama he is unable to follow, produced in the west and shown here. The evidence before us is that he is hardly able to follow that.

A. European social drama but not an Indian subject.

Mr. Green: Your point is that such a film would have a decided Indian favour?

A. I think "Kim" has been set as a text book.

Chairman: But how often do the Indian students read Kipling?

A. Certainly "The Jungle Book" was very popular with the students.

Q. You are familiar with Indian students. Have you ever tested them on their knowledge of Kipling and others?

A. I admit that at present they don't read him much.

Q. Even your teachers, how many? Hardly one per cent.

A. Of course they hardly read any novels at all.

Q. Even Kipling's works. They appeal more to the Anglo-Indian than to the Indian.

A. I think if there were not the language difficulty, "The Jungle Book" would be read.

Q. Of course Kipling seems to be overrated with the Indian. Would you advise then that the educational films, I am speaking of education in a broad sense, should be produced in large numbers to be used for general exhibition? I don't mean merely for the school-room.

A. I don't think there is any place for the film in the school room, or any very great place for it in the school room. That, I think, was the general opinion of the last two Imperial Conferences.

Q. But do you know what the International Conference decided? We have heard that at the Internal Conference they attach great value to the cinema as a factor in education. The one that met at Basle, I think.

A. I think the opinion of the Imperial Education Conference would be more valuable. After all the Imperial Educational Conference is composed of experienced educators in most cases, heads of educational organisations, such as Dr. Viljeon.

Q. I mean it strikes the lay mind that as a means of adult education the film is a very powerful factor, particularly in a country which is illiterate like ours.

A. The general film; but not necessarily the educational film. I have been to two special exhibitions of educational films got up to show the Imperial Education Conference both on the last occasion and on this recent occasion what the educational film could do. It was the general consensus of opinion amongst the delegates of the first exhibition that the films were very poor, very feeble; and that actually the only films which had definite educational value and were of real interest were the pictures of scenery and life in other countries. On the last occasion we saw some films by the Educational Films Company in London and some films by the Empire Publicity Board. These were very good. The Educational Films Company showed some very good films dealing with the growth of plants. On the other hand there was a film dealing with metal production intended to show the application of the film to technical education, which was extremely difficult to follow; it was a black smudge! You could not see anything at all.

Q. Have you seen the German educational films, any of them?

A. There were some miscellaneous films of all origins in the first show we went to. I think there may have been some German ones. Then of course there is the cost of the cinema machine, which is so expensive a thing

that it is out of the question for the school: for the colleges it is an expensive item; and if you get one of any size it probably takes more amperes than your mofussil current can supply, unless you have a generator.

*Q.* Anyway, none of you have tried it here in India? You don't speak from experience?

*A.* Well, I am speaking from the experience of the people in England. The general consensus of opinion among those who had tried it was that it was not worth much.

*Q.* We have seen that. It has been referred to us. Then, what is it you want the municipalities to do?

*A.* Oh that was the Battersea plan. A special arrangement is made for shows to be given in the afternoon, or at some time when the cinema house is not ordinarily working. If they can fit in an extra show in what is otherwise dead time, they can give it cheap, and the children can be given concession rates to go. So that you enable the children to go to the cinema at cheap rates. That seems to be an excellent plan.

*Mr. Green:* Just one or two questions. I take it your point about the use of the cinema in education is that it cannot replace the teacher? I will put it this way—that it can only supplement the teacher.

*A.* I think the point is rather that, if you are going to use anything, the magic lantern would be more useful. It can stay still and you can point to it.

*Q.* The cinema too might be stopped.

*A.* Yes, but not for long. What would I think be extremely useful is the idea of Polyjectory Limited, and that is a magic lantern which will show still films, because the great difficulty of using lanterns out here is the cost of the slides and the weight of them, getting them out from England. But I understood to get a picture of any size from a still film would be extremely difficult because of the heat.

*Q.* Well, I won't bother you more about that point. You advocated what was in effect an aesthetic censorship. That is to say, you want some power, some body to class films (a) and (b). Isn't there an inherent difficulty in that on an aesthetic point the best and most moral people may differ seriously?

*A.* I think there is a difficulty in drawing a dividing line but I do not think the difficulty would be so great. I imagine, as to be impracticable. One can think how one would actually classify most of the films one has seen. It is merely a question of picking out the best.

*Q.* I will give you a practical point. In order to class the film, as you desire, assuming that it is practicable, your sub-committee. I think you suggested, would have to examine every film?

*A.* I imagine the importers would put up certain films for a special certificate.

*Q.* I see. If they thought they had a film of aesthetic or moral value, they would put it up, not otherwise?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* But naturally they would—if they are going to get concessions for the (a) class, they would try to get as many films classified in that class as they could.

*A.* I think they would tend to import as many (a) class films as they can. And that is the intention.

*Q.* Now, all these films will have to be seen for classification. The amount of mere inspection done at present for censorship purposes for the whole of India works out already to 6½ hours a day five days in the week for the whole year. Now, if you are going to have your aesthetic sub-

committee in the censorship, it will have to be continuously in session. And so it could not be honorary obviously. They would have to be paid. I am only trying to put the practical difficulties of the scheme. I assume that this would be done centrally. It is not necessary to classify them for the provinces?

A. I think it would have to be done centrally. It is a point I wish to bring out. Otherwise there would be difference of opinion.

Colonel Cranford. Your main point, I take it, is that you charge the films producer of to-day with lack of taste?

A. Yes, they put up such a mixture.

Q. Quite right. That is the impression I have too, that they are not drawn from a cultured class.

A. Yes. I would like to make that point very much. "Peter Pan" is a very notable example.

Q. And your suggestion is whether we can devise some means of improving the general standard of taste in the film by bringing cultured people into the censorship or something, or some such system as you suggest?

A. Yes, by getting a positive attitude in the censorship picking out the best, and not merely looking for the faults.

Mr. Neogy: You say, there is only one story magazine in this part of the country?

A. In English.

Q. But there is a number of Bengali story magazines?

A. I think there are a few magazines.

Q. Isn't it your experience that at one time it was not considered quite fashionable for the educated Indian to read Bengali novels or Bengali magazines; but now the taste is considerably changed and they read the Bengali novel and the Bengali magazine to a very large extent.

A. Well, that hasn't been my experience with the university student, though, of course, he reads more Bengali novels than English, that is natural.

Q. I was much interested in your suggestion that films should be classified. I should be prepared to classify them if it was practicable. But I find that in England they classify a film not according to its aesthetic quality but according to its suitability to be shown to adults and children. They issue two kinds of certificates, (a) and (b). Supposing you were to have a thing like that, would you support it?

A. No. I think any good and tastefully produced thing would do for the children, if it is good.

Q. Would it not meet your object if we had some classification on these lines? The cleaner things would certainly fall into that class suitable for children. And the adults also might be interested in most of these films.

A. I don't think it would be entirely the same thing. I would prefer my own scheme.

Q. To a certain extent it might meet your object?

A. I think the tendency for the Children's committee would be to say: Is there anything in this film which will harm them? I want them to see whether there is any good in the picture.

Q. Whether it is beneficial? I quite see your point. In any case, whether your scheme is adopted or not, I take it that you would advocate the inclusion of a literary critic on the censors' board even for their ordinary work.

A. I would do so.

Q. In any case you want a larger proportion of literary men there?

A. Yes.

Q. Now you have referred to the dramatic talent of the Bengalis, of which you have considerable experience. I am sure, because I remember to have seen some of the dramatic performances in your own college at Dacca.

A. Well, they vary.

Q. Well, don't you think that if this film industry were to be developed on proper lines, it might find profitable employment for the educated Bengali? Would it not open out a career for them, and be a sort of solution for middle class unemployment?

Q. Well, don't you think that if this film industry were to be developed ly think on an average, if you take a hundred Bengali students, you would find more boys amongst them with a natural talent for acting than you would in a similar random group of English students. They seem to be less self-conscious.

Q. Have you experience of students of other provinces?

A. No, I have not.

Q. Now, from that point of view, would you be prepared to recommend to Government to take action for giving protection to this industry?

A. I am afraid that is a matter on which I have no opinion.

Sir Haroon Jaffer: Do you think it would be a good thing to start classes to train scenario writers, actors and others, in training colleges, schools of art or colleges of science.

A. Necessarily, I should imagine, that is a thing on which the men actually connected with the industry would be better able to speak.

Q. Mr. Oaten says he would like such classes.

A. Well, I should imagine if anything of that sort has to be done, it would be better to go to the actual cinema industry men and say, "Look here, we have got some money for training boys to enter the cinema industry. Will you use it in the way you think best," rather than start a Government Department. That is what we did with the railway.

Q. But should not the Government assist in this way to encourage the industry?

A. They might give financial help but the actual system of training had much better be under the control of the industry. They know what they want so much better.

Q. I think you know something about the Text Books Committee?

A. Well, Yes. I have served on some of them.

Q. Wouldn't it be better to have a Cinema Education Committee under the Education Department? Or some such committee under the Director of Industries?

A. I must say the Text Books Committees in this province have worked so unsuccessfully so far, that I should be very sorry to add to their responsibilities. The whole system is at present, I believe, under review.

Q. Or do you think it would be advisable to recommend a separate department under the Minister of Education for this kind of thing in order to advise Government to assist this industry?

A. I don't think it matters under what department the board is so long as it contains the right sort of person, and that is a man of taste who can look at a film as an artistic production and not as if he was censoring a comic paper. I mean, not looking for faults, but looking for something of merit.

### Written Statement of Mr. E. VILLIERS, dated the 15th December 1927.

The following answers to the Indian Cinematograph Committee Questionnaire are given by Mr. E. Villiers, past Vice-President of the European Association; Mr. Villiers being the accredited representative of the European Association with whom he has discussed some of the more important issues

raised and being given full powers to give evidence in front of the Commission as their representative.

The answers should be taken as applying in the main to European Cinema Houses and as the result of observation of European Cinema Houses.

# INTRODUCTORY.

1. No.

## GENERAL.

2. (a) (1) Of the Indians who attend, I should estimate 25 per cent. as belonging to the educated classes;

(2) 75 per cent. of the illiterate classes.

(b) 50 per cent. cheap illiterate Indians; 20 per cent. educated Indians, Soldiers and Anglo-Indians; 30 per cent. Upper class Europeans.

(c) So small as to make it impossible to give any fixed percentage.

## PART I.

### *Film Industry in India.*

3. (1) Comic, such as Harold Lloyd and Charles Chaplin;

(2) Films dealing with adventure, piracy, such as Douglas Fairbanks generally features in;

(3) coming a long way off (1) and (2), films of a sentimental nature.

4. Judging by the crowds in the cheap seats and elsewhere, yes.

5. (a), (b) and (c) I have no knowledge.

6. (a) No; what an Indian audience requires, like every other audience, is variety; that is to say a certain number of India films and a certain number of Extra-India films; there would soon be a reaction were an excess of India films shown.

(b) (1) and (2) I am unable to say.

7. I have no knowledge.

8. (a) and (b) I have no knowledge.

9—11. I have no knowledge.

12. Judging by the fullness of the Cinema House, the Amusement Tax can be no serious handicap.

13. I am unable to say.

14. Unquestionably; it must not be forgotten, however, that since educational films would help the growth of the film industry in India by teaching the public to think cinematographically, the danger of unsuitable and improper films would become all the more acute since the harm would be more widespread. If, therefore, the public is going to be taught by means of educational films in its youth to think more in terms of the Cinema, it is highly necessary that films coming outside the education category be of a proper type. I believe there should be a vast demand for educational films.

15—16. I have no knowledge.

17. No.

18. I am strongly opposed to Government having any lot or part in film production, except possibly with regard to educational films.

19. I have no knowledge.

20. (a) The question does not arise.

(b) The question does not arise.

21. I am strongly opposed to the State having anything to do with the management of the film industry as a monopoly.

*Films of the British Commonwealth.*

22. The general answer appears to me to be this: If India looks upon herself as an integral part of the British Empire, yes; otherwise, no.

(a) If she participated, yes;

(b) no: for the reason that the very essence of Cinema film consists in its depicting non-average incidents in life (or out of it) and as such, I do not think that any film depicting the true everyday hum-drum life of India, or any other country, would be sufficiently popular to attract audiences and so reach the public;

(c) No.

23. (a) As regards making known the conditions, resources and habits of the people, I do not think that Cinema pictures can do very much, for the reason given under 22 (b); a certain amount can be done regarding the special doings of Governments and from time to time outstanding incidents taking place throughout the British Empire;

(b) An International Film Library.

## PART 11.

*Social Aspects and Control.*

24. (a) In part, yes;

(b) No; but unquestionably a certain number of suggestive films of an unpleasant character do, from time to time, get through;

(c) exaggerated night life; sensuous kissing; and particularly "close-ups" and brutality.

Films of the above nature are, in my opinion, harmful to everybody, and particularly to the Indians, who naturally cannot have the necessary perspective or knowledge wherewith to gauge the extent to which such films are representative, exaggerated or purely fictitious.

It is harmful in the way that all immoral and unpleasant suggestions must be harmful to any human mind;

(d) (1) no;

(2) no; and under this heading, I would include pictures such as "The Hunchback of Notre Dame"

(e) no;

25. Yes; certainly, and for the reason that social customs between different countries differ so fundamentally as to make what is entirely harmless in one country considered to be most harmful in another; as an example: in the West it never occurs to any one to look upon Dancing and the holding of a man's wife in another man's arms during Dancing as anything other than a most harmless amusement. In India, I understand, this is still looked upon with horror and disgust.

26. (a) No; I have not yet seen any film which could possibly be said to offend religious susceptibilities;

(b) the question does not arise.

27. (a) Undoubtedly many films exhibited in India tend to misrepresent Western Civilization and lower it in the eyes of Indians; except to the highly travelled and educated (from a Western point of view) Indians, I think many films are generally unintelligible and mostly misunderstood by them, with inevitably undesirable results. The only remedy lies in a more adequate censorship on a basis of mutual co-operation between the European and Indian.

(b) Yes; in that all films dealing with India that I have seen in Europe, represent her as a country of nothing but beauty and romance and love. I am unable to say if they were produced in India; probably not.

28. (a) and (b) yes; *vide*.....

(1) Sex, crime and horror;

(2) *Vide*, 24 (c).

29. No; on the other hand, I think that the American practice might be introduced of forcing Cinema Proprietors to mark their public advertisements and posters of a film as either suitable or unsuitable for children.

30. I do not think this is practicable, however, desirable.

31. (a) Yes, if efficient.

32. The censorship in Bengal is not altogether satisfactory, although, I think, that even as at present constituted it prevents a lot of harm and to this extent does good. I think it is defective in that adequate censorship implies full-time adequately paid Censors.

I suggest more stipendiary Censors of adequate qualifications.

33. (a) No, except with their illegitimate recreation;

(b) No;

(c) No;

34. (a) I think there should be a Central All-India and Burma Board, for the purpose of dictating policy, composed of Europeans and Indians: male and female; the carrying out of this policy should be checked by the above mentioned stipendiary Censors, who should be delegated to the various centres for this purpose and for censorship work:

(1) for the purpose of ensuring greater co-ordination;

(2) No;

(3) *Vide* (a);

(4) the choice lies between Bombay and Calcutta: the merit of Bombay is that, I understand, the majority of films are imported *via* Bombay; on the other hand, Calcutta is half way between Bombay and Burma; on the whole, I favour Bombay.

(b) No;

(c) *Vide* 34 (a);

(d) From Central Revenues, if inspection fees do not suffice.

35. (a) No; there should be a more reasonable proportion of Indian members and also the European Association, as representing the European non-official point of view throughout India, should be represented instead of the Chamber of Commerce and the Trades Association;

(b) *Vide* 32; I consider this to be the only feasible system.

36. (a) Judging by results, the present inspectors appear to be fairly well qualified, although there is room for a certain amount of improvement in this respect, *vide* (24, (a)).

(b) No; only contentious films need be examined by the Board; the rest should be examined by gentlemen who should be properly remunerated for their services.

37. (a) Yes; I consider the powers vested in the District Magistrate are sufficient and to this extent the Law provides adequate safeguards; I do not consider, however, that the safeguards are sufficiently used.

(b) I do not consider that any further safeguards are needed.

38. I have heard of instances where films which would not have been passed by Calcutta have been passed by Bombay Censors, and then brought over to Calcutta; I do not imagine, however, that this is of very frequent occurrence.

39. No.

40. Most emphatically; by posters, handbills and advertisements being censored: judging by some of the posters I have seen, I think it is just as necessary as is the censoring of the films themselves. The remedy is to get, so far as possible, the co-operation of the Trade and failing this, it should be enforced by the Board of Censors.

I have seen many posters which, while not greatly objectionable to the Western mind, are highly objectionable to the unsophisticated and illiterate Indians for the reasons given above. They are objectionable for the same reasons that these suggestive films which include sensuous kissing and under-clothed women are objectionable.

41. I think the moral standard, from the Indian point of view, must seem to have deteriorated due largely to the perfectly healthy but much greater freedom which now-a-days exists between the sexes and also to the disappearance of much of what a European would now categorise as false modesty; but however much the average European has re-adjusted his views as regards what is modest or immodest, I very much question whether the average Indian has done so.

42. This is a matter which obviously can only be dealt with by the Cinema Committee.

43. (a) Yes; to the extent of my adverse criticism above;

(c) It is for the Cinema Commission to say;

44. The Press could do a great deal in assisting in the maintenance of a good standard of films by refusing to put in laudatory notices of questionable films; unfortunately, however, the Press appears to be influenced in this respect by the advertisements that it receives from the Cinema Companies and to this extent is being not altogether true to itself.

45. (a) Studios should be licensed and inspected;

(b) Yes;

#### *In General.*

I think there is a no-less-than vast future for what might be termed educational films; that is, historical, geographical, geological and scientific, etc. They will command large audiences if they are well produced and should in themselves have an enormous power for good and anything that could be done to encourage such films, should be done.

### **Oral Evidence of Mr. E. VILLIERS, Representative of the European Association, on Wednesday, the 21st December 1927.**

*Chairman:* I suppose you go to the cinema, Mr. Villiers?

A. Yes, I go a fair amount.

Q. Where to?

A. In the main I go to what I call the west-end cinema houses, but just occasionally I have been to those down Chitpore Road and the more Indianised cinema houses.

Q. Have you seen any Indian films yourself?

A. Real Indian films? Never. I have seen films in England purporting to represent Indian life but I have not seen Indian films out here.

Q. I mean produced here, dealing with an Indian story.

A. No, never.

Q. Are there any films showing Indian stories in England?

A. No, I have seen a film which purported to introduce scenes from Indian life chiefly dealing with Indian mythology.

Q. In a European city?

A. I imagine so.

Q. Yes, I quite see your point in answer to 6 (a), that there should be some variety in the show, otherwise having purely Indian films alone in any quarter would not be either useful or desirable.

A. No, any more than the restriction to purely English or European films would go on attracting English audiences.



**Q.** But what will be your attitude if, for instance, the quota system were introduced in order to encourage the Indian film industry in this country, with this qualification that films produced in India dealing with Indian subjects, I mean Indian films passed by a central board as suitable for all audiences not merely for Indian audiences, a certain proportion in a week should be shown by each cinema exhibitor, gradually rising till the industry establishes itself. What would be your attitude towards that?

**A.** Well, my attitude in general would be this, that I think the cinema industry and the production of cinema films must as it were find its own level. That is to say, demand must create supply rather than supply create demand. And I think gradually, from the technical point of view, if the production of Indian films in India reached a reasonable level,—I cannot say whether it has reached that to-day or not: because I have not seen them—but supposing it had, I imagine that on their own merit they would create their own demand. But in general, both in regard to the cinema question and to other questions, I think the demand as usual must create the supply and that it is unhealthy and unwise to put what I maintain to be the cart before the horse by starting with a supply and hoping it will create a demand.

**Q.** Then if you had been in England you would be opposed to the quota system there?

**A.** Absolutely.

**Q.** I quite see your point of view. But the difficulty here is that a large number of high class theatres which cater for the European, Anglo-Indian and the westernised Indian, are afraid to show Indian films on their own merits because of the fear that they will lose their clientele.

**A.** In other words the demand is not there.

**Q.** And therefore the Indian producer does not get those facilities for exhibition which he would have otherwise, if all the theatres showed them. So unless some element of reasonable compulsion is introduced he has very little chance of showing his film.

**A.** How, Sir, does that hold good considering the proportion of Indian cinema houses to European ones?

**Q.** There are said to be about 360 houses, of which about 250 are really showing Indian pictures, but the high class ones, what they call the high class ones where they draw an audience—the cinema habit has not grown among the Indian to the same extent as among the European and Anglo-Indian and the educated Indian, that is to say, more percentage of people compared with population go among this class of people—one in five among the European and probably one in 200 among the Indian. The cinemas which pay the best, taking the box office receipts, are the ones which cater for this class of people.

**A.** That is one of the reasons why I feel so strongly about introducing a far greater proportion of what one might term educational films, because there you are going to teach people to think in terms of the cinema. I think that is one of the benefits which will accrue from it.

**Q.** So that you think that disadvantage does not outweigh any difficulties you may feel about the theory of compulsion?

**A.** No, I am against compulsion in any form.

**Q.** So in the same way you would not advocate any compulsion on preference for the British Empire.

**A.** No.

**Q.** And the same argument would apply to that?

**A.** Absolutely.

**Q.** You want the thing to thrive on its own merits?

**A.** Precisely.

*Q.* Now, do you think your view—of course, you are speaking I see for yourself and not for the Association, but do you think your view is largely shared by members of your Association?

*A.* Well, Sir, I came to represent the Council of the European Association, which in turn is undoubtedly very representative of the European Association.

*Q.* I only want to know whether this view is shared very largely?

*A.* I think so. I think the majority of the views expressed would be probably in these terms.

*Q.* Do you know anything about "The Light of Asia"?

*A.* The Book?

*Q.* No, the film?

*A.* No, I have not heard anything about it.

*Q.* I mean you have not heard any comments in the European circles in which you were discussing Indian films at all?

*A.* No, I have not.

*Q.* Now, as regards the censorship, are you generally satisfied with the tone of the pictures as they are shown, I mean the western ones which you see?

*A.* That has got to be answered, having two view points in mind. From the point of view of the western audience, and from the point of view of the educated Indian, I think in the main the films are of a fairly reasonable standard. Undoubtedly from time to time a certain number get through which I consider at best do no good and at worst do a certain amount of harm to any human mind, but in the main from the western point of view I don't think we have got any serious cause for complaint. But from the uneducated Indian point of view I personally think that the present situation leaves a good deal to be desired.

*Q.* Now what is your apprehension? What is it you feel about that from the uneducated Indian's point of view is undesirable?

*A.* Well, in a certain measure the uneducated Indian still has a definite amount of respect for the westerner and for the west. And I think some of the films, as read through his untutored eyes, give an entirely false representation to his mind—I think they must do—of the trend of western civilisation and the extent to which films shown and scenes depicted on these films are representative or not representative of what might be called the decent average of western life.

*Q.* Nobody can say that. However, that is the harm you apprehend?

*A.* Yes. The other point is, I think that a certain number of these films do undoubtedly play on the lower passions of people who are not in a position to discard them as being either fictitious or extraordinary.

*Q.* Let me see if I understand you aright. They get more easily excited, that is what you mean?

*A.* Their lower passions, whether they are sexual or whether they are passions which are aroused on seeing scenes of bestiality and such like.

*Q.* They are a more impressionable set of people?

*A.* Yes. They have not got the armour which knowledge and true perspective gives.

*Q.* I suppose this impression of yours is not based on any actual results you have seen, but it is more your apprehension?

*A.* Yes, my apprehension, and also judging from the applause which greets such things, and it seems to me to be so utterly unnecessary, because where on the one hand you do get applause from a certain section of the house over scenes which are questionable or which should be discarded as being entirely unnecessary, on the other you get tremendous applause when there is a decent picture of life. To my mind, I think, there is plenty of appreciation in the mind of that class of audience for the far finer and better sides of life.

*Q.* From what we have seen they often cheer when the hero arrives in time to save the situation.

*A.* Yes, exactly.

*Q.* I do not know if your experience is similar. Let me tell you from my experience—now I pay more attention to these things than I did formerly. Whenever a noble act is done, or the rescuer comes in time, they cheer and cheer like anything.

*A.* Yes, exactly. I have a particular specific instance in my mind. Take a film, for instance, like "The Flag Lieutenant," it was a perfectly clean, nice and straightforward film from beginning to end. It ran in Calcutta certainly for two weeks and possibly it ran for three weeks also. The house was absolutely crammed on the two occasions I had been there,—I first went there towards the beginning and again towards the end of its run. There was tremendous applause throughout the whole show. A film like that is far more recreative and far more healthy to everybody than these things.

*Mr. Green:* What kind of audience was that? It was a mixed audience?

*A.* It was a perfectly representative audience so far as I could see. The expensive seats were filled and the 2 annas and 4 annas seats also were crammed like anything.

*Chairman:* Where was it?

*A.* At the Globe.

*Q.* You are speaking of the people in the pit?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* It is the one rupee seats.

*A.* The whole house from top to bottom was crammed on the two occasions.

*Q.* You are mistaken in thinking that the lowest seats were below.

*A.* Yes, I am sorry. I knew I was going to give evidence and so I began to notice these things more minutely, and I was surprised at the size of the house on the two occasions.

*Q.* Did you notice the uppermost gallery?

*A.* I cannot specifically say that I did.

*Q.* That is the place where the four annas people go. I have been to the Globe Theatre three times and I found the gallery empty.

*A.* I cannot definitely say I did notice. I went to another film which I consider to be equally healthy with one or two exceptions; in the case of anything comic such as Harold Lloyds the place is simply packed.

*Q.* You come into contact with the cinema-going Indian public, both the educated and the uneducated class in the course of your work and life?

*A.* Yes, to a certain extent.

*Q.* I suppose you cannot point to any definite instance where the effect of the cinema altered their view points?

*A.* No.

*Q.* It is more an apprehension that you feel?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Having regard to the difference in habits and outlook? Supposing people whom you have in mind saw what you and I see in the "Black Bottom Revue"—mixed bathing scenes and so on, I suppose you apprehend if they had an opportunity of seeing them that would have a similar effect?

*A.* I think so.

*Q.* I could see that. When one civilisation comes in contact with another civilisation there is bound to be repercussion of that sort.

*A.* The customs are so fundamentally different.

*Q.* So that whether it is in actual life or on the screen it will perhaps have the same effect?

*A.* Yes.

**Q.** I put it to you, in order that you may realise the difficulty of dealing with a situation like that, whether it would not be the wiser course to get them familiar with these things, especially as they have got to get familiar with people who live a life different from theirs, so that they may appraise it at its true value? I may tell you my own experience. Years ago I went to a ball at Government house. That was about 25 years ago. I was very crude then and it struck me that it was only bestial people who could do that. But now that I get to know more of them I think that it is their way of dealing with life. After all we have to live together?

**A.** Yes. I think you should start at the bottom and not at the top. By a gradual process you can give education from the bottom by means of a far wider range of subjects. That is one part of my answer and the other part is that I am not necessarily prepared to say that some of the things to which we are accustomed in the west are of necessity as healthy as they were 30 years ago.

**Q.** I could see that. For instance, would you ban scenes from the *Folies Bergeres*?

**A.** Personally I would—some of them.

**Q.** Although it has an artistic value?

**A.** Yes. I would certainly ban anything that is of the "Grand Guignol" horror type.

**Q.** Or women fighting in the underworld?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** There are difficulties in dealing with a situation like this. The trouble in my mind, to speak frankly, is how best to deal with the situation. I quite realise the difficulties either way.

**A.** I personally think the only way to deal with it—of course, there will be a certain amount of outcry or disagreement from the western part of the audience, and one would be accused of holding ultra-puritanical ideas,—I think in a great measure the films certainly do no good and they might do no harm to the sophisticated, but I am inclined to think, going on the principle of the greatest good of the greatest number, there should be some form of greater censorship of films which, though admittedly harmless to the sophisticated and the cultured, do definitely have a derogatory effect on the others.

**Q.** There are two factors in that connection, perhaps, which you are not aware of. The class of people you have in mind do not favour the social dramas. They rather have a fancy for serials, fighting films and comics which do no harm.

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** That is one factor which is weighing with me, so that the danger is over-estimated in my opinion because the audience you have in mind do not go to that class of show. The second thing which weighs with me is this. Indian films are getting more and more popular with that class of people and I thought it might be a safer course in order to encourage the growth of Indian films to create a taste for their own surroundings and for their own things rather than go about stopping such things.

**A.** From the little I have seen of it, the Indian cinemas seem to be much more sparsely attended than the more popular ones.

**Q.** No. If you go to the Crown Cinema you cannot get access. They are showing "Durgesh-Nandini". This is the third week of its run?

**A.** That is an Indian film?

**Q.** Yes, and a very poor type of film at that, but still Indian crowds go there like anything because of the nature of the subject. It is from a popular novel.

**A.** The danger of leaving things as they are at present, to my mind, is that in the measure that you educate the Indian with Indian films you are also going to a certain extent to educate him to appreciate more harmful films which I think he would not otherwise do.

Q. This will replace that class of film in a way.

A. Yes.

Q. Where these Indian cinemas exist, if they are encouraged to show more Indian pictures, they would be content only with showing comics and occasionally good social dramas?

A. Yes.

Q. That is the tendency now-a-days in the Indian cinemas.

A. It may be a possible solution which had not occurred to me before. The harm that I apprehend is to the tremendous crowds that I see—I am thinking particularly of the two cinemas that I go to most often, namely, the Elphinstone and Madans Theatre where you have got cheaper seats down below and they are packed night after night.

Q. How often have you seen films of the type which you have in mind?

A. Unpleasant ones?

Q. Yes, those which are likely to be misunderstood, I do not say misrepresentative.

A. Fairly, frequently.

Q. Where sex passions are depicted? In some cases sex passions are depicted in an unobjectionable way, but where they are depicted in an unduly emphatic way—I want to know what percentage of films shown, they constitute?

A. Looking at it through the eyes of the four annas seats I should say that as much as 33 per cent. of the films shown have got incidents in them which I think are definitely liable to misinterpretation, not only misinterpretation but even when correctly interpreted, harmful. Take, for instance, a very fine film, such as "The Hunchback of Notre Dame." In the beginning there was a scene of a cripple being flogged to death. It was perfectly revolting. The rest of the film was a magnificent one. Take a film like "The Black Pirate." There you have a galley slave being flogged and flogged until he collapses. I think those incidents leave a scar on the mind of anybody. I think they are definitely harmful to people who have not got the wherewithal to view them in the proper perspective.

Q. Then I am afraid at that rate you see no difference between a British film and an American film in that way.

A. No.

Q. Have you seen "The Rat"?

A. I saw "The Rat."

Q. You would have objected to it on this ground?

A. A great deal of that is unnecessary and I think it is definitely harmful to people who cannot put them in the proper place.

Q. They flock to "The Folies Bergeres" and see scenes there in actual life. Why do you object to their being shown to Indian audiences? Do you not think it will open their eyes to the world? It happens in actual life in Paris, where thousands of people like you and me have the advantage of seeing them. We do not hesitate to go there, that is, the best of us. I have seen the best society there.

A. I should very much hesitate to take my sister there.

Q. But many people take their wives?

A. Wives and sisters are different. I have not got a wife and I cannot say what I would do if I had a wife.

Q. Don't you think it is rather too much to deprive these people who have not got the benefit of travel? How are you going to open their eyes?

A. In India you are starting to a very large extent on virgin soil, and when you have got your virgin soil, why not start on sounder lines rather than copy the mistakes of the west.

Q. You know our people have got a very poor outlook on life. They adopt a low standard of living and they are very sadly wanting in hygienic

methods. If they see scenes like that and other things, that would open their eyes to their own lack of energy and so on?

A. I think you could do that in a very much better way.

Q. The film producers are the best judges of what will appeal to the cinema-going people? They are not producing specially for you?

A. I think the tendency of the cinema producer at present is to play down to his audience rather than get his audience on to a higher level. You have got a peculiarly constituted people, they are intensely dramatic in thought and action. When you see a cooly and talk to him you realise how intensely dramatic he is. Their language is a very graphic language, much more than the western, and that is a material which could be made very much better use of.

Q. You are now driving at the other point that there is plenty of material for developing Indian films?

A. Yes, and therefore I do not think it wants forced encouragement.

Q. Capital is shy and it is not in good hands and unless some encouragement is given it is not likely to go on on right lines. You recognise that the growth of the film industry here should be guided on right lines?

A. Yes.

Q. And not leave it in the hands of third rate people who may also play down as the people in the west are doing?

A. Yes, and therefore it is I wish to see more stress laid on educational films.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* You have just said you are not in favour of the quota system and Imperial preference, and the majority of your Association hold the same view? You are the past Vice-President of this Association?

A. Yes.

Q. Do the present office bearers hold the same view?

A. I have discussed this question with the President and the various officials of the Association. Their views coincide in the main with mine.

Q. I was anxious to know whether the General Secretary agrees with you.

A. You will have to ask him.

Q. 90 per cent. of the American films come here?

A. A very large proportion.

Q. All this money goes to America?

A. A very great deal of it does undoubtedly.

Q. What is your advice as to how to stop this?

A. The only means which I think as a healthy one is to improve the production of films in countries from which you wish to draw your films. America practically started this cinema industry and England has recently been sitting up and taking stock of the situation and realising how far she is behind. There is already evidence that the British films are making immense strides in that matter. That has been done without subsidies, without artificial help. That I think is the correct method in which all countries should proceed.

Q. It would take a very long time.

A. I do not think so. It is only 2 years or possibly 3 years since the agitation against American monopoly films was started in England and during the past three years a very very noticeable improvement to my mind has been made in the standard of production from the point of view of technique, and other points of view. From what I have seen in the course of the last few years I think that a clean, straightforward film which is properly produced can hold its own any way with the more unpleasantly sensational films which we are getting.

Q. Do you think that British Empire films should come to India free of duty?

A. That I think has got to be dealt with in considering the general fiscal policy.

Q. Supposing the Empire likewise allows the same concession to Indian films?

A. I am personally strongly in favour of an Empire preferential tariff and to have the Empire entirely self-supporting.

Q. As regards the capital of this industry, you think many British companies could be induced to set up studios in India?

A. Do you mean capital would be forthcoming for that?

Q. I mean would not your association help with capital?

A. That is outside the province of our association.

Q. Not as an association in a body, but some members of the association may do that individually?

A. To the extent that money could be got here in India. There are certain very definite and natural advantages and you have also certain very definite disadvantages. If a sound revenue-producing scheme was put up I do not doubt that Clive Street would put its hand into its pocket, as it would in the case of a jute or coal proposition, but it would not do so, I am convinced, on any other basis or on any sentimental grounds.

Q. I have been just told by Mr. Madan that Americans have come here to India to start studios and build theatres. Would you like it?

A. I would very much sooner see that initiative and sign of life being shown by the British cinema industry, naturally I admit that. But if the Americans can come and produce decent films I do not see why they should not come.

Q. They should be allowed to do it?

A. Yes, I think so.

Q. There is no reason to stop it?

A. No, provided they produce films which will conform to the standard set up as the result of your investigations.

Q. Do you think you would prefer to have titles and captions of these films in the vernacular also?

A. Yes, I think it would be an advantage. What I do think is that posters also should be censored, I think in some ways they are every bit of them as important as the film.

Q. I have not understood your reply to question No. 22. (Reads.) What do you mean by "otherwise not"?

A. If the British Empire generally decides to formulate a scheme whereby there should be imperial preference, participation should be given to members of the Empire.

Q. Do you advocate that India should be outside the British Empire? I cannot understand what you mean by "Otherwise not"?

A. No, I advocate it should remain within the British Empire. There are certain Indians who differ from my point of view, and I believe there are certain Europeans even who say that India should remain outside the British Empire. I personally think that she should remain within the Empire both from the point of view of the good of the Empire and of the good of India.

*Chairman:* As an equal partner?

A. Yes, as an equal partner eventually.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* In reply to question No. 29, you say (reads).

A. I may have misread the question. As I read it the question implied this. "Are you in favour of certification of certain films as for adults only." I say no, because I presume that if you certify films as for adults only that means that children are prohibited from seeing them. I think that, however desirable it may be, is outside the realm of practical politics. I think if you

force cinema proprietors by legislation to label their films as suitable or unsuitable for children you are not prohibiting erring parents from taking their children if they choose to do so. It is a fair warning as to the type of film. The one is a definite order, the other is merely in the form of advice.

*Sir Huroon Jaffer:* In reply to question No. 32, you say the censorship in Bengal is not altogether satisfactory. Do you mean to say that they are passing obviously obscene scenes?

A. No.

Q. Nevertheless extremely objectionable scenes.

A. I do not even go so far as to say in the main "extremely objectionable films"; but I think a certain number of films do get through which, as I tried to explain to Mr. Rangachariar, are, in my opinion, harmful.

Q. They are still passing such films?

A. Presumably; but nothing approaching definite obscenity. There has not been anything yet that I have seen passed which can be characterised as obscene.

Q. Is this laxity on the part of the Censorship Board the cause of attracting undesirable films to India?

A. No, on the contrary, I think, the Board of Censors keep out a **great number**.

Q. Still they come?

A. A certain number come in presumably.

Q. Because the Board is not satisfactory?

A. Because the Board do not hold the same views as myself.

*Mr. Neogy:* I was interested in your reply to question No. 35 where you say that there should be a more reasonable proportion of Indian members on the Board of Censors. Well, perhaps, you know that at present there are six Europeans and two Indians on the Bengal Board, and you are not satisfied with the work of that Board.

A. Exactly. I would like to modify that statement. I am not altogether satisfied. I am not imputing for a moment any suggestion that the Board is a thoroughly unsatisfactory one. All I say is that they prevent a good deal of harm already but that a certain amount more might well be done.

Q. You seem to think that certain films may have undesirable results from the political point of view. Your view seems to be that the eastern people look upon the westerner with an amount of respect, and in so far as a certain class of films may be misunderstood by them, it may lead to undesirable results from the British point of view.

A. I did not say from the British point of view.

Q. That is how I interpret it?

A. You misinterpret it.

Q. Now one of the principles which the Board of Censors have got to bear in mind is that subjects which tend to bring into disrepute the British prestige in the Empire are not to be allowed. Here you have a Board predominantly British in character, who have to apply that particular principle, and yet you are not satisfied with their work in that particular respect?

A. Excuse me. I am not dissatisfied from the point of view of harmful political results because I think the Board has been sufficiently adequate. What I am thinking of is the broader moral effect on the people owing to their lack of understanding.

Q. And you are generally opposed to any misrepresentation of any kind?

A. Certainly.

Q. Now yesterday a European lady told us, on behalf of a body on which there were a considerable number of European ladies, that the cinema here does not at all misrepresent western life but that there is a certain amount of exaggeration.



A. Which must be misinterpretation.

Q. She added that a certain amount of exaggeration is essential in the cinema having regard to the fact that pictures have not the advantage of the spoken word to explain the various situations. Exaggeration is essential from that point of view?

A. Yes.

Q. Now you are opposed to misrepresentation just because it would be as bad as teaching wrong history?

A. Certainly.

Q. And you would take up the very same attitude whether the British or any other Western nation were misrepresented or even if an Eastern nation were misrepresented—say, the Chinese?

A. Certainly.

Q. And surely you would also object to the French or the Belgians being misrepresented.

A. Yes.

Q. Now have you seen the British film called "Mons."?

A. No.

Q. Well, the Committee had occasion to see it and the impression it left on my mind was that there were certain scenes in it which were certainly not very favourable to the French or the Belgians. In one or two scenes they showed the situation on the Franco-Belgian border on the eve of the battle of Mons, and in certain scenes the Belgians and the French people were represented as unpatriotic. In one scene we saw British Tommies engaged in digging trenches, while the French and the Belgian were represented as simply looking on. Then one Tommy is represented as saying to them "If this blooming country of yours is good enough for us to fight in, is it not good enough for you to dig in?"; and it was then only that those people lent a hand in the digging of the trenches. After having seen that picture, I looked up my history of the War to find out what the exact position was, and this is what I read. It is about the French frontier battle,—the British stand at Mons. "There was scarcely any need for using our food stores because the Belgian women pressed forward with all kinds of eatables and their husbands aided in the trench digging with great vigour." There was, therefore, a very objectionable misrepresentation in that film.

A. I quite agree.

Q. Would you keep out such a picture on that ground?

A. I think it is a mistake to rake up any old sores. They do absolutely no good to anybody and they do a certain amount of harm. They keep alive certain moods which are utterly useless to people, and I maintain that exaggeration of this sort must always and inevitably be misrepresentation. For instance, the total misrepresentation of a book like "Mother India" depends on its lack of perspective. To that extent, I think, any film exaggeration is the same thing.

Q. Now, you expect the Board to take into account all these various facts, don't you?

A. Well, it is a Utopian ideal I admit, but coming down to practical politics—I can only take the more grossly misrepresentative scenes as doing definite harm. Such a thing as you cited will probably do no harm except to a stray Belgian who may be there.

Q. You have expressed yourself very clearly on the question as to whether Indian pictures should be given any Government protection, and you would depend only on the law of demand and supply.

A. Yes.

Q. Do you make an exception when you come to the question of Imperial Preference?

A. I am personally strongly in favour of Imperial Preference throughout the whole Empire, but otherwise and until we can get that particular form of

protection for the Empire which I believe is capable of being entirely self-supporting, I am in favour of free trading in all parts of the Empire. I am strongly against an Indian protective policy.

*Chairman:* You want it based on an agreement of all the nations.

A. Exactly.

*Mr. Neogy:* Now, when you say that India should participate in an Imperial Preference policy if she considered herself as an integral part of the British Empire—what you mean is possibly that it is for India to decide whether she should participate in this policy?

A. In the long run and eventually it will be for India to decide, I think, to what extent she will become, what might be termed, a free partner in the commonwealth of the British Empire; in the long run, because you cannot ever force a continent like India to do a thing against her wishes, you can only try to guide her in the way which you believe will be for her eventual good. If ultimately she decides she is going to be a participator in the British Empire, she will presumably fall in with the majority policy of the Empire.

Q. But till then what is to be the policy for India? You have not arrived at that stage, and yet you have to give an answer to this question, to the question of participation in this policy in regard to the film industry. Question No. 22.

A. I think the answer to that must be left to the Legislative Assembly.

Q. I quite agree, and I think your intention is that the general question of Imperial Preference should come up for discussion and a decision should be taken on that; and the film industry should not be taken up for separate treatment.

A. Yes.

Q. Thank you. I quite understand your meaning.

*Chairman:* I think that policy has been greatly misunderstood. In the Imperial Conference Resolution there is no necessary question of preference at all. All that is done is mere advice to each part of the Empire to consider what best it can do to develop the film industry in its own place. It does not necessarily involve the question of preference.

A. I want something much more concrete for the British Empire. I want a definite agreement arrived at in black and white between all the members of the Empire as to the extent Imperial preference can be given between the different members.

*Mr. Neogy:* If it is proved to be not to India's benefit to participate in such a policy in regard to the film industry, would you recommend India to adopt it?

A. That question must be looked at from a broader aspect than the mere requirements of one particular industry. If the Legislative Assembly, who are the proper body to consider and decide these matters, consider that eventually it would be a good thing to protect it, they may do so. Personally I am all against protection except on the one basis that I outlined. If they consider you should have protection, I presume they will give you protection in the same way, as I am sorry to say, they have given it in other industries.

Q. You are strongly opposed to Government having anything to do with the industry? You add one exception, "except possibly as regards educational films". Now, what is your idea? There are two alternatives open to the Government, either to set up a studio to manufacture their own films or to entrust the work to private agencies—which would you prefer?

A. I am not an educationalist but I claim to be the ordinary average intelligent citizen; I cannot say how much importance I attach to Educational Films and what scope I believe exists for the young generally and particularly in this country because of certain inherent qualifications. If there exists a supply of films outside India or within India which the Government can get a lien on they should do so; I do not know whether in the

West there are educational films produced purely as educational films and for that specific purpose, if there are, then I suggest that in the main the educational authorities might be given facilities—whatever those facilities might be—to get hold of these films. I think possibly for purely educational purposes in India educational films might be taken under the aegis of Government.

Q. Not necessarily manufactured by them?

A. If it is possible to avoid it, I want the Government to have nothing to do with the manufacturing of films.

Colonel Crawford: I would like to clear up just one more point on the question of Imperial preference about which many people have not the right idea as to what the European in this country thinks. I presume in addition to what you have already said, you would say that each component part of the Empire must decide its own requirements in regard to participation in such a policy?

A. Each unit of the Empire has presumably, and after very careful thought, to make up its mind within what latitude—what maxima and minima—it is prepared, under the process of give and take, to participate in Imperial preference; but that Imperial preference when it takes place has got to be a unanimous one throughout the Empire.

Q. That is the final goal, but as steps to that goal each unit should participate in accordance with its own requirements?

A. Exactly.

Q. I was only trying to get the general view of the European in India. India if she participates should be governed by her own requirements pending any bigger development of policy?

A. Her own requirements so far as certain irreducible minima are concerned, but always with the broader outlook of give and take, so as definitely to lead as far as possible to that goal.

Q. I gather that you find some leakage in the censorship at present and you have in one of your answers definitely indicated the directions in which you think stricter censorship is required.

A. I would like to qualify the word "leakage". It is possibly not so much leakage as lack of definition. What I would like to see is a Central Board which would be a board mainly dealing with policy. At present it is a lack of definition on their part and agreement between the Indian and European communities as to what is or is not fit to be shown to the public. I do not think it is so much leakage, if you understand the difference. By leakage one would characterise a certain type of film definitely, through a laxness of censorship, getting through. That is not the real trouble. The real trouble is lack of policy.

Q. In the Bombay Board the policy is very strictly laid down and some of the points to which you have alluded here are definitely prescribed. Yet they get through.

A. But do they get through *via* Bombay or through Calcutta?

Q. Both.

A. Then there is leakage.

Q. And you get these scenes of exaggerated night life, sensuous kissing and passionate love-making. Those are the things you are strongly against. Now do you think that that type of film which shows exaggerated night life, passionate love scenes, is particularly popular with European audiences?

A. No.

Q. I am asking this from the point of view of the exhibitor. Supposing we came to the decision that to help the Indian producing industry we should put on a quota, that quota would apply to houses drawing their money from European audiences. Do you consider our ordering a quota of Indian films to be shown in what we may call West End theatres would definitely harm the Indian exhibitor?

**A. Films about India produced in India?**

*Q.* They will mainly be definitely of Indian life. If we order a quota like that to be shown in West End theatres what is going to be the position of the exhibitor who owns a cinema with regard to his audiences--will he get them?

*A.* No, personally I think there will be a big dropping off because I don't think the European out here wants to see such scenes; it comes down to this, the European out here in his recreation quite naturally--I am casting no aspersions on India--wants to get away from India. I think it is a perfectly understandable and perfectly natural idea and to that extent people will just be bored by such Indian films.

*Q.* The exhibitor will lose his audience?

*A.* I think so, undoubtedly.

*Q.* We have got to recognise that fact?

*A.* I think so.

*Q.* Now do you think he goes to the cinema as a habit or to see particular films?

*A.* There are a certain number who go definitely as a habit. I know quite a number of Europeans who go definitely twice a week, or once a week. They go as a regular cinema habit. There are others, and I should think they were in the majority, who go to see specific films.

*Q.* The larger portion you would say are drawn by particular films?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Would you say that in the community, among Europeans in India, there is a general feeling against this display of passionate love-making on the screen?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* You would agree that that is very largely due to most of us recognising that Indian customs on sex questions are different to ours and that we desire to conform to some extent to their point of view?

*A.* I think the answer to that is twofold. I think it is partly that most people are bored by that kind of thing. You have not got the particular strata of European out here to which that appeals--what I might call the kitchen class. They are not out here and so you don't get that appeal. So, I think, a certain number are simply bored by it. Then the others definitely do so for the main reason that it is obviously in many ways an offence to Indian susceptibilities and as such to British, and also as I say from the point of view that we do feel that it is a pity that western life in matters of that sort should be misrepresented.

*Q.* But I would take you a bit further. I was trying to elucidate what I personally believe is the feeling of the community. For instance, in your private room you are aware that the Indian does not expose his private parts and you therefore are very careful to conform to his opinion; and I have a feeling that the community have that thought at the back of their mind.

*A.* Undoubtedly.

*Q.* That they are trying to do in Rome as the Romans do.

*A.* Undoubtedly. There is a natural sensibility among Britishers out here not to give offence.

*Q.* You are aware, of course, that as regards educational films, you spoke about the possibility of bringing Western educational films out here, educational films produced in the West out here. Our evidence has been that for Indian educational films you have to take into consideration the idiosyncracies not only of India itself but of each province, that if you gave them an educational film dressed in Western dress the whole concentration will be on the Western dress and the audience would miss the educational part. They must have the dress of their own province and normal events and then only can they pick up the educational factor in the film.

A. If you are going to do that your education is going to be very parochial. I had more in mind what you might call entirely educational subjects, such as geography. I once saw a film, an educational film, for the purpose of teaching geography where instead of learning, as you and I did, lists of meaningless names of places, there was a ship starting off on a map of the world. The ship started off, then there were dotted lines showing the various places she was going to. The outstanding features of a particular harbour at which the ship called were shown; for instance, on the voyage from England to India. This is a graphic way of teaching geography—I only give an instance—which I believe would appeal enormously to the Indian.

Q. I was thinking more of educational films in their wider aspect, such as public health and agriculture.

A. I think where you are dealing with malaria and public health, that it has got to be done with local colour.

Q. Well, that rather confines us to the production of such films in India.

A. Certainly.

Q. Now, Mr. Neogy pressed the point as to whether we should recommend that Government should get these films produced by private agency. They are not a commercial proposition. I mean the Indian producer cannot produce them on his own as a commercial proposition.

A. I take it that it could be done in this way,—the Government would say “we want a film depicting the measures which should be taken to improve village sanitation and we will undertake to show so many thousand feet per annum, paying you a royalty thereon.” I wanted to make it absolutely clear that I entirely disagree with the idea that Government should in any way become partners in the film industry. I would not advocate it even in educational films.

Q. If Government want public utility films made here, the work should be entrusted to private contract?

A. Private contract and private competition under a system of certain guaranteed minima of shows on which a royalty shall be paid. In that way you will really be helping the Indian cinema industry much more, as you will encourage competition. As things stand at present, Government is interfering too much in these matters. The ideal conditions would be that when Government want a thing done, they must put it up for contracts, so that they will get the advantage of competition.

Q. We have it in evidence that private people are charging about Rs. 2 a foot, but Government Departments themselves have with their resources produced at 3 annas a foot. Government have to pay the overhead charges. They were taken definitely by an agricultural officer who happened to be an expert in photography?

A. Yes, that is a bit of difficulty.

Q. There is also the further difficulty that at present there is an enormous demand for Indian entertainment films and the existing companies cannot supply the demand. They will, therefore, for some time to come find the production of educational films the least paying proposition?

A. Government have got to be prepared to pay the full charges if they want the work done by private enterprise.

Q. Even on that score you think it would be better that Government should pay a bigger price than they should set up a studio of their own for producing films of public utility?

A. Let me take an analogous case. Take, for instance, the coal trade in India. Government say that they are producing coal. But they have practically killed the coal trade. I think that is an absolutely unsound thing for any Government to do. I don't think that Government have got any right to do anything of the kind, nor do I think it will be eventually for the good of the country. Those things must be left to private enterprise. Govern-

ment ought to pay the current prices and get the films produced by private agencies.

**Q.** The production of public utility films is not a commercial proposition by itself? A producer will only take it as a side show. He won't do it himself, and you say that Government should not do it?

**A.** I did not know until Colonel Crawford had put up certain figures that there was so much difference in the cost of production. I will put it this way. The primary consideration must be to get an adequate supply of educational films. If it can be done through private enterprise, so much the better. But if it cannot be done, rather than that education should suffer through loss of these films. I would advocate Government participating, as a last resort. But private agencies should be tried first.

**Mr. Green:** I see you very strongly advocate a Central Board with stipendiary censors. A suggestion has been made that it might be possible in India to get full time censors on half time pay, that it might be possible to get gentlemen who have retired from business or from Government service or from the learned professions to serve full time for less than full time pay. Do you consider it a sound proposition?

**A.** No, I don't think so. That will lead to packing the board with a lot of half pay retired men—men who are out of touch with modern conditions and modern progress. I don't think you will get the same amount of efficiency if you adopt such a course.

### **Answers to the Questionnaire by Mr. M. P. GANDHI, Secretary, Indian Chamber of Commerce, Calcutta.**

1. Yes, through the members of the Chamber.

2. (a) Indians of the educated classes frequent cinemas in large numbers than Indians of the illiterate classes. The attendance of neither class is on the increase at the same centre but as new areas are being catered for, the number of people visiting cinemas is increasing. This experience covers all centres.

(b) Cinemas in the European quarters have a larger proportion of Europeans than Indians, while those in the Indian quarters are patronised only by Indians.

(c) The proportion of children under 14 is about 5 per cent. and people under the age of 25 represent about a fourth of the audience.

#### **FILM INDUSTRY IN INDIA.**

3. With Indian audiences the classes of film that are most popular are Indian subjects produced in India. Serials and wild West Dramas with plenty of action.

Speaking of India in general, big spectacular films are better liked.

4. Yes, the exhibitors are catering adequately for educated Indian audiences. As for the Indian masses they can only follow serials, wild West Dramas, with plenty of action and Indian dramas, but the output of Indian pictures is not adequate.

5. Indian films, depicting Indian life, are not readily available because of the insufficient output.

(a) They are not always of good quality.

(b) They are popular with Indians only but do not appeal to the Europeans.

(c) It is more profitable to show an Indian film to a purely Indian audience than a foreign made film, but European audiences and educated Indians prefer foreign films to Indian-made films because of the poor quality of the latter. A few of the successful Indian films amongst Indian audiences are

the following:--Ramayan, Vishnu Avatar, Pati Bhakti, Jaidev, Krishna-kanta's Will, Shiva Ratri, Nurjehan, Lanka Dahan, Krishna Jananam, Toorkey Hoor, Laila Majnoo, Nala Damayanti, Dhruvacharitram and Patni Protap.

6. (a) Yes.

(b) Films dealing with the religious subjects would appeal most strongly to both educated Indians and Indian masses in general; but Indian Historical and social subjects appeal to the educated Indian audiences than the illiterate classes.

7. No difficulty is experienced in obtaining suitable films for exhibition to British troops. Conditions are different with Indian Troops who can only follow Indian subjects--Serials and Wild West Dramas with plenty of action. But Indian troops cannot afford the luxury of cinema shows on account of their poor pay.

8. (a) There is considerable room for improvement in all directions.

(b) The difficulties in production are absence of co-operation of Government and Public Departments to help the Indian producer with facilities for staging scenes in which, *e.g.*, Soldiers, Railway Trains, Steamers, Aeroplanes, etc., are necessary. Then again Cinema theatres have no proper up-to-date lighting equipment and modern studios.

As regards exhibition protection should be given to exhibitors against film piracy. Exhibitors holding exclusive rights on films for which heavy Royalties have been paid sometimes find that used prints of the same are imported by unauthorised people and exhibited. This results in grave financial loss to the holder of the exclusive rights of exhibition. This nefarious practice should be stamped out altogether by legislation.

9. There are good many foreign films obtainable at reasonable prices. But British producers demand more for their productions than the foreign competitors although not of equal merit. As far as Indian films are concerned there are not many good films obtainable. This is due to lack of proper lighting equipment and modern up-to-date studios. There is absolutely no monopoly or tendency to monopoly of the supply of exhibition of films. A representative of an American owned concern remarked in his evidence before the Committee in Bombay that Madan Theatres in a centre like Bengal enjoyed a monopoly and did not encourage the production of companies other than a favoured few. This does not seem to be a correct statement. Madan Theatres enjoy no such monopoly in Bengal or for that matter in India or Burma. Besides the theatres owned by Madan Theatres in Bengal there are other cinemas, *e.g.*, The Globe, Purna Theatre, and Wellington Cinema in Mathiaburz. As regards the charge of taking films from favoured few, as far as my committee are aware the charge is untrue that Madans have been taking select pictures from the following producers:--Paramount, Warners, Producers Distributing, Foz, Metro-Goldwyn, United Artists, Richmond and other independent American, British, German, French, and Italian Producers. In addition to this Madan Theatres, my committee understand, are also taking films on a rental basis for certain centres from First National, Pathe and Universal. Regarding Indian productions Madan Theatres likewise hire films from several Bombay and Burmese Producing Companies, although they produce themselves. It is true that Madans have a chain of branches of theatres but this does not constitute a monopoly.

10. So far as my committee are aware, the Block and Blind Booking does not exist in India. Provided the pictures are good and suitable for the market it is necessary to buy certain number of films in order to keep going the various theatres that may be situated close to one another. First run or Key Theatres exist in India. It is chiefly from these houses that the Exhibitor gets a substantial return and the public also enjoy a better type of entertainment.

11. (a) Yes.

(b) No.

12. Receipts should be higher without the Amusement Tax as more people would visit cinemas and would prefer higher class accommodation. The removal of the tax from the theatres affords a further reason for its removal from cinemas also.

My committee are asked to make suggestions also in this connection with the existing entertainment taxes. They would like to point out that in so far as people in cinema trade are nowhere making anything like large profits or even earning a successful return on capital employed, the entertainment tax might be said to constitute a handicap. They are also of the opinion that this tax compels the audience or at any rate induces them to choose an inferior class of accommodation at the theatres. This naturally considerably reduces the gross and nett receipts of exhibitors.

13. Owing to the present Customs Tariff, the exhibitor is making smaller profit (if any). The present tariff on the finished pictures does not appear to have any appreciable effect on the Indian industry as Europeans and educated classes insist on seeing Western films. The indigenous film industry is catering for a different class of people. The abolition of the amusement tax would be greatly beneficial to the cinema industry in India.

14. Yes, it would help the industry to a certain extent. But the demand for this class of films should be created by the Government or other agencies by carrying out propaganda necessary on this behalf. Even then, the films would have no entertainment value from the point of view of an exhibitor.

15. The conditions are favourable for film production in this country because of cheap labour, good light, scenic beauty, ancient buildings, temples, etc. What is necessary is proper up-to-date lighting equipment, modern studios and co-operation of Government and public Departments to help the producer with facilities for staging scenes.

16. No. More money must be paid into film-producing industry, properly equipped, up-to-date studios, should be built, schools founded as has been done abroad for teaching, scenario-writing, photography, directing, acting, etc. Talent will have to be imported from abroad. In any case, expenditure of vast sums of money would be involved in the creation of the necessary organisation.

17. It is difficult to give an unqualified answer to this question. It will come forward if it is found profitable to invest in them.

18. Yes. Government and Public Departments should co-operate and help the producer with facilities for staging scenes. There should be special cinema school to train up our boys on this side.

19. The cost of film production in this country is far less than that of other countries. At the same time the quality of the film produced in India is poor.

20. (a) No, not much. The question does not arise.

21. In connection with the different adverse criticisms directed against imported films, your committee seek to investigate the possibility of Government handling the entire exhibition of motion pictures in the country. This is a proposition which, my committee cannot at all endorse. They are radically opposed to the State management of this industry. The State management of this industry makes it difficult to work it on commercial lines. The setting up of a State Agency is also fraught with several other dangers. The State Agency cannot be run on cheap lines as a competitive private agency could. The press, the platform and public criticisms should be sufficient safeguards against exhibition of immoral films. Besides, there is the safeguard of the censor.

The questionnaire appears to suggest the existence of a kind of monopoly over certain classes of films and hence, it is argued that if some one in the public can exercise a monopoly it would perhaps be as well for the Government to take over the entire direction of the exhibition of films in India. My committee would submit that the premises underlying the argument are incorrect. There is no monopoly existing at all within their knowledge. The largest number of films exhibited in India is through the agency of Madan



Theatres, Ltd., but there does not seem to be any monopoly and there is not the least doubt or question except for the number of agencies which underlie every business, that there is free competition so far as the import as well as the manufacture of films in this country is concerned. My committee are not also without their apprehensions that the operations of the State monopoly may not tend in the directions of the eventual exclusion of American films on the ground that they do not conform to the moral standard, and the dumping of British films and neglect of the Indian industry.

#### FILMS OF THE BRITISH COMMONWEALTH.

22. If the British Empire films are of a high standard and the prices compare favourably with other foreign productions they should be imported; but otherwise my committee are fundamentally opposed to any idea of Imperial Preference.

(a) It will not assist in the development of the Indian film industry.

(b) Owing to the poor quality of Indian film there is no room for reciprocity as such films would be totally rejected outside India even within the British Dominions.

(c) No. One of the questions that has been most prominently discussed of late is the question of giving what my committee venture to call an artificial preference to Empire films as against films produced in other parts of the world. While Messrs. Madan Theatres, Limited, have endeavoured, and my committee think successfully, for reasons which they shall give presently, to exhibit that which is the best possible in the Motion Picture Industry before as many houses as possible in this country, they have not been able to obtain a sufficient return to run their business with any remarkable profit. The reason why my committee submit that they have tried to do the best possible in this line is that they have continued to increase their circuit and provide the owners of theatrical houses who have fixed definite contracts with them to exhibit films together with other entertainments for which they are able to obtain rights on payment of heavy royalties. The Company's circuits continue to increase, and have scarcely been known to fall off. Hence it is that whilst the Company's returns from the entertainments of this class are short of being really satisfactory, this is, perhaps, the best way in which it would be possible for them to run their concern with this type of business if it is ever to have any measure of success in the country. It should be guarded against prejudice or bias in favour of or against productions of any other country? My committee venture to ask if there is any suggestion which could be made that pictures like the master-pieces, that America has during the last few years been broadcasting, have been made in any other country and they take it to be fair to suggest that if the best entertainment be withdrawn from the theatre-loving public in favour of that which would be only second best it would be comparatively a very poor substitute for these master-pieces.

It would not only be most hazardous for the cinema industry to give preference to productions of one country over those of another but it would also be a disappointment to the theatre-loving public to artificially withdraw the best productions from them.

As distinctly the suggestion is made and your committee has taken up the question of Empire films. My committee believe it would not be out of place for them to point out that in Great Britain itself by far the largest number of motion pictures which are exhibited in different theatres are foreign pictures in which America has the biggest lead. The reason is obvious, namely, the people which have the best value for the money which they pay for the admission to these theatrical houses, and the master-pieces which America can give by virtue of the fact that they are beginning to specialise in this industry which cannot be done with the same advantage elsewhere. If there is any outstanding feature film that Britain can produce, my committee are sure, show men would be prepared as a matter of pure business proposition to handle it and then to show it. They feel, however, that the principle of Empire preference cannot possibly be linked up with a

country's amusements and entertainments. From a business standpoint, any artificial preference of this character would ruin cinema business. From the standpoint of the public at large, it is unfair to recommend that an artificial restriction should be placed on its enjoying its sober recreation. It is not a sound doctrine either that the entertainment of a people should be controlled in this manner. So far, therefore, as your enquiry relates to the question of giving special preference to the Empire films over those of other countries. My committee emphatically venture to assert that they cannot possibly agree to it either in the interest of cinema business in this country or in the interest of theatre-going public.

A suggestion has been recently broadcasted in the interest of giving preference to British Empire films over foreign productions that several social dramas as picture on the screen are in the nature of corrupting morals and are not sufficiently sober. My committee would deal later with the general question of censorship of films. They strongly repudiate the suggestion that as a class the social drama as pictured on the screen in American films has a tendency to corrupt morals any more than any drama depicted elsewhere. The Censor ought always to be the best judge and it could not lie in the mouth of any reasonable committee to suggest such evil; where the scheme of censorship exists it should be necessary to broach this main question or suggest that films as a class manufactured in one country should be set aside in favour of films manufactured in any other country on this ground. Whilst it is not possible for the British Empire to claim any equals to such masterpieces as America has produced in the shape of pictures like—"Thief of Bagdad" or "Ben-Hur", or the latest masterpieces—"King or Kings", and numerous other absolutely chaste pictures of historical, antiquarian and sociological interest which also excel in their romantic display, my committee would enquire if there is anything again to match such comedies as, for instance, Chaplin's Kid—or some of the masterpieces of Harold Lloyd. The great artist and a large number of others who have had direction over some of these pictures have no equals in other countries, and it is unfair that money's worth should not be allowed to the Indian audience in showing such artistic productions and that showmen should be asked for a very unsubstantial reason to give preference to the Empire productions. My committee venture to submit that this outcry of films having a bad taste is not a piece of disinterested criticism and that it is made only to prejudice the issue. Assuming, as my committee venture to think your committee should, that there will be always a fair and correct censorship on all productions, this suggestion of a low tone in pictures should be immediately ruled out of consideration.

The committee of the Indian Chamber of Commerce notice from the questionnaire and that is also a prominent defence in public that one reason why suggestion is made that Empire films might be given a preference is that the Imperial Conference has recommended such preference to be shown to the Empire Industries in the best of hopes and belief that it will get similar preference in other parts of the world and that Indian productions will benefit by it. Whilst there is no doubt that studios are increasing and Indian productions for the screen are also on the increase, it cannot be denied that the capacity of the Indian artist is not yet developed so successfully as to cherish the hope that these pictures can be broadcast in other parts of the world with any financial advantage or success. There is a complete dearth or real artistic touch. It is recognised that these Indian productions cannot hope in the near future to improve sufficiently or have a sufficient diversity of subject-matter to enable them to appear before the critical audiences in the civilised parts of this Empire. My committee, therefore, submit that this argument of a fair return in favour of an Indian industry which might be expected to give preference to the British industries cannot be held to be sound or within reasonable possibility of becoming a practicable proposition. The fact remains as we mentioned above that Great Britain itself patronises foreign artists and has no sentiment in favour of its home productions but wants for entertainment that which is the best and the most artistic in the picture production trade, and it is therefore not possible that Indians can

invade that territory with indigenous production, and hope to score an advantage; nor can the Indian theatre-going public sacrifice its own taste in favour of the people engaged in the film industry in other parts of the British Empire. The fact remains that the film industry is not one that caters to the ordinary physical wants of mankind. What is wanted is a thing which might prove as satisfactory at as little a cost or sacrifice as any other. It would be foolish to expect an audience to sit calmly and witness what may be a most chilling exposition of human nature on the screen, merely because such exposition is prepared by a famous artist within the Empire, instead of outside it.

The only kind of Indian film that might occasionally attract attention in other parts of the world is one that would depict Indian Natural Scenery or its ancient architectural beauties, or films showing what travellers came to India to see, namely, its great antiquities, the evidences of its past greatness and civilisation. Similar and parallel films of the Empire or any other part of the world for similar reasons fail to attract educated instinct, and taste of India; hence there would always be a competitive merit in films of a certain class of productions in any part of the world. It would make possible for them to stand on an equal level with films manufactured anywhere else. Indian films will not be able to obtain any special or protected advantages if the Indian public will agree to sacrifice its taste and see Empire films instead of non-Empire films. It is hardly necessary to dilate on this point any further.

To a certain extent, (b) by reciprocity of interchange of locally-produced films.

## PART II.

### *Special aspects and control.*

24. (a) No.

(b) No.

(c) Immoral films depicting the nude are harmful and should not be allowed.

(d) (1) and (2) Yes.

(e) No. The suggestion is made that crimes in India have increased because of the exhibition of the motion picture depicting certain classes of crime and delineating exaggerated detective stories in serials. It is not for us to speak on a moot point which can be left to experts of criminology to give an opinion on this matter but we certainly challenged the suggestion that a few people with morbid tendencies would be immediately led to a career of crime in imitation of the exaggerated and practically impossible artifices displayed in motion pictures. Only the other day, the Commissioner of Police, giving evidence before the committee, denied that the cinema film had anything to do with the increase of crime.

(f) This does not arise.

25. To a certain extent; but the existing censorship covers such cases.

26. (a) Care should be taken.

(b) There has been a case or two where a picture had to be withdrawn because a certain class of audience objected thereto.

27. (a) No. We do not think it has a tendency to lower Western ideal before the Eastern eyes. The majority of the audiences seeing the Western films are intelligent enough not to form this incorrect impression.

Your inquiry turns in connection with important films on the general issue as to whether foreign films are not misunderstood by the Indian public because by their nature they are not intelligible to the unsophisticated mind of the ordinary Indian and therefore it is more likely to cause evil than good. My committee would admit that films have an educative value and just as an educational system which might be wrong might cause harm, so also a wrong picture or one presented in a garb which would make it liable to be understood by the audience might have an unwholesome effect on them. At the

same time they wish to point out that as things stand now the audience at different theatres are of a different composition and the theatre-owners not only study their tastes but also their correct wants from the selfish point of obtaining financial results, as well as with the correct object of educating the public. They have, therefore, reason to think that a respectable firm like Madan Theatres, Ltd., have selected the right class of subjects for each particular audience. There is an uneducated public which has already begun to develop a taste for motion pictures. For them numerous Indian films presenting Indian social dramas with Indian titles would appeal better than pictures of Western life. The organisation of Madan Theatres, Ltd., and numerous other organisations in the country have spent resources in assisting the development of this taste and every endeavour is made to present a moral behind the theme just like the endeavour which is made in every drama which living actors present before audiences. Thus public is satisfied with what are known as serials showing adventurous actions and what are shown as thrilling incidents. It is, therefore, of great value in cultivating the imaginative faculty of unsophisticated audience and it helps in making an uneducated crowd feel an interest for education, for knowledge, and information, and also helps to make them intelligent and informed. The majority of the pictures of Western life so far as the social drama is concerned are exhibited at first class theatres audience which is restricted so far as the biggest portion is concerned to the educated classes. My committee do not think it is necessary to suggest that an educated Indian and people who are now in commercial walks of life and attend these better class theatres have not the intelligence to understand the true significance of the pictures or to be lead away to improper thoughts or to be demoralised by misunderstanding the spirit of the action of the picture of Western social life. As it is, through the last few years the exodus of the Indians to the West for the purposes of the travel has been great and increasing and even those who have not made the benefit of higher education even in schools are known to be visiting Western countries for the purposes of travel, information and entertainment. The people now understand Western ideas enough and the suggestion that the exhibition of pictures of social life is calculated to disturb the prestige of the Western nations and also lower them in the estimation of the intelligent public cannot hold any water.

27. (b) My committee have no information on this point.

28. (a) (b) 1 and 2. Such films as are likely to have a bad effect on children and adolescents are not allowed to be shown.

29-30. No.

31. Yes.

32. Yes, provided we have a broad minded censor. My committee would like to refer in connection with this piece of criticism to the censor. They suggest that a broad-minded man of the world with an artistic taste should be in charge of this department. It is generally supposed that he always does his duty but from the recorded evidence of showmen, my committee feel that they have been unfairly treated where the censor has used his doubt to disallow films from being exhibited before the public rather than giving them the benefit of the doubt. When this machinery is in existence they submit that the Public Enquiry Committee like the present one will accept the present proposition that a fair and careful censorship must take the possibility of instigating crime directly or indirectly not only rare but non-existent.

33. An unreasonably strict censorship would undoubtedly interfere with the recreation of the people.

33. (b) It would adversely affect the business and would ultimately involve a falling off in the attendance at cinemas.

(c) Yes.

34. (a) There should be two Censor Boards one situated in Calcutta and the other at Bombay with powers to pass or ban a film finally. In such

cases the decision of any one Board should be considered as final. In other words films passed in one centre should not be banned in other.

(1) Calcutta and Bombay are the two large importing centres and a Censor Board in each of these important places would save the exhibitor time and money in sending over his films for censorship purposes.

(2) As stated above it would save the trade a lot of inconvenience if there were two Censor Boards, in the centres named.

(3) Each Censor Board should have a mixed body of representatives, Indians and Europeans both official and non-official with a non-official majority fully representing Indian commercial interests and opinion.

(4) Calcutta and Bombay.

34. (b) No.

(c) This question does not arise.

(d) As at present by Censorship fees on films examined.

35. No. As suggested above it should have a non-official Indian majority, fully representing commercial interests and opinion.

(b) An experienced broad-minded censor assisted by an advisory board of non-officials at each centre would be the best arrangement.

36. The system is not objectionable provided the right man is appointed. What we want is a broad-minded censor with knowledge of the world.

(b) No. As it appears to be unfeasible and besides the cost also is bound to be prohibitive.

37. Yes.

(b) No.

38. Yes.

39. No.

40. It is neither necessary nor advisable nor practicable to censor posters, handbills and advertisements of cinema films. The Press Act is quite adequate for this purpose.

No.

41. Yes.

42. Yes, we suggest their inclusion in the Advisory Board.

43. (a) Yes. Pirated copies of the films for which an exhibitor may have the exclusive right should not be allowed to be imported into the country.

(b) Exhibitors holding exclusive rights of exhibition of films for which heavy royalties have been paid sometimes find that pirated or stolen prints are imported by unauthorised people and exhibited and this results in a financial loss to the holder of the exclusive rights of exhibition.

(c) Pirated or stolen copy should not be allowed to be cleared from the Customs nor should a Censorship Certificate be given to such copies.

44. The usual voice of public criticism would go some way towards keeping up the high standard.

45. (a) No. The censorship takes care of all films produced and nothing more is necessary. My committee are also agreeable to give their opinion as to how far the Government can afford facilities for the development of the film industry in India. They believe that the Government would help producers by allowing them access to some of their departments and placing their Civil, Military and Naval resources at their disposal for film-production. The Government could arrange to proper concerns to take, what might be propaganda films in relation to some of their departments, as for instance, education, agriculture, irrigation and the like. The question is asked if special protection should be given to the Indian film industry by restricting the import in some measure of foreign films in the event of its being improved.

In the interests of the film industry it would be desirable to do away with import duties on raw materials required for manufacture. Perhaps, this

would be best done in the shape of rebates on the basis of actual running feet of good film manufactured by Indian artists, allowing reasonable percentage over such manufactured article for usual wastage.

(b) This will have the effect of restricting private enterprise.

**\*Oral Evidence of Messrs. K. J. PUROHIT and M. P. GANDHI,  
Representatives of the Indian Chamber of Commerce, Calcutta,  
on Wednesday, the 21st December 1927.**

*Chairman:* There are one or two points on which I should like to have your views. I suppose you represent the Indian Chamber of Commerce?

A. Yes.

Q. Have you got in your body any people who are interested in the film trade either as exhibitors, distributors or producers?

A. Yes, we have some members interested in the trade itself.

Q. As producers or as exhibitors?

A. Some as producers and some as exhibitors.

Q. Do you think Government should start a studio for producing educational films or should they entrust the work to private agencies?

A. The production of educational films by itself will not be a paying proposition. People go to cinemas for amusement and not for education. So long as the production of these public utility films is not going to be a paying proposition, you cannot possibly ask private agencies to do work of that kind on their own. Whenever Government desires that a public utility film should be produced for educating people in certain directions, say in agriculture, industry or public health, then instead of opening out their own studio, they should entrust the work to private agencies just as they do in building bridges and so on. For building big bridges Government don't go and open out their own workshops, but they give out the work on contract to private agencies.

Q. Do you think that the class of work required for producing these public utility films would require the direction and assistance of people who are capable of spreading knowledge like expert in industry, agriculture and so on, which the private agencies cannot command?

A. On the other hand, private agencies have to deal with a variety of problems in the production of their own films, and they will certainly have a far better class of trained people than Government could command.

Q. Do you mean in the technical portion?

A. When the work is given to a private contractor, he has his own trained men on his staff who pick up a considerable amount of knowledge in the course of their duties, and it will be most expensive for Government to employ such men.

Q. Have you got any private studios in Bengal?

A. There are one or two. Madans have got one.

Q. Madans are just trying to establish one. Are there any others who are capable of turning out these educational films?

A. Now, these films have to be taken out in the open, in the fields and factories. Supposing you want a better kind of handloom, then you have to go to the place where it is installed and where it is working and then take its photograph. You can't do it in the studio.

Q. Don't you think that model studios should be established by Government so that it may act as an incentive for private agencies to establish their own studios? Don't you believe in model institutions being started by Government for pioneering industries?

A. No, and both of us agree in this view, because the existing agencies are sufficiently competent to turn out the kind of films which Government want. In fact some of them will turn out better work than a Government agency.

Q. Is that your experience?

A. The people in the trade are trained men.

Q. What training have they received?

A. Take the case of Madans. His camera man has ample opportunities for taking photographs of various things during his career. He is probably an imported man and has seen other countries.

Q. You may take it that Madans photographer is not imported from abroad.

A. His daily bread and butter depends upon his own efficiency, and unless he is quite up to the mark, he will not be kept on by Madans.

Q. Do you believe in training Indians in the technique of film making? If so, what steps would you suggest should be taken?

A. Faculties for this particular branch of the trade should be established in the various universities.

Q. Do you think there is sufficient opening for young men in the direction? Take for instance in Bengal. How many men do you expect to go in for that kind of training?

A. At present the knowledge gained by people who are already in the industry is very haphazard; they have picked it up as they have gone along in the line. The actor, for instance, has seen somebody acting on the stage and has copied him. But if there were a regular faculty attached to universities for giving scientific knowledge of the trade, naturally people would go in for it.

Q. Do you expect the universities to open out classes and grant degrees?

A. Not exactly degrees, but diplomas can be granted or what you call "competency certificates" may be given.

Q. I suppose you would advocate that Government should open out occasional classes in order to train people?

A. Not Government.

Q. Who should do it then?

A. The universities. Just as there are science classes, a branch for teaching the cinematograph trade also should be added.

Q. But there will be photography, direction and so forth? Do you think the present colleges will open classes voluntarily?

A. They may not do it voluntarily, but public opinion should be trained in that way.

Q. Is there much public opinion amongst Indians about the cinema in Calcutta? Are they interesting themselves very much in the work of this committee?

A. I think so.

Q. Then your suggestion is that a faculty should be opened and colleges should open out classes for this purpose. Do you want Government to do anything in that direction?

A. They can spend the money in other directions much better than investing in this. There are various other items on which Government could spend money with greater advantage to the people.

Q. You don't believe in the cinema as a powerful means of education especially where illiteracy prevails?

Mr. Gandhi: We do believe in it. But I say there are various other things like sanitation, public health and other things which require all the money that Government can spare.

Q. Are not education and sanitation important items?

A. Yes, they are, but the Red Cross people are doing work in that direction. It is a regular organization having all possible facilities for imparting information right down to the villages.

Q. How many members of your association are members of the Red Cross?

A. I for one, am a member but I could not tell you how many are members, because this question was not discussed.

Q. Are there a sufficient number of people who are taking interest in a voluntary organization like that?

A. For instance this week the Tropical Medical congress was held, and we arranged with special doctors to deliver lectures on special subjects.

Q. How many people in the villages attend the Tropical Medical Congress?

A. We arranged several lectures by the members, and one of the doctors gave us a whole history of his activities in the villages. So I find that as time goes on there will be more and more workers and propagandists forthcoming, and the present societies are doing everything possible in this direction.

Q. You are willing to leave it to agencies of that sort to spread a knowledge of hygiene and sanitation?

A. They are composed of doctors and others who are well qualified to say the last word on the matter.

Q. What about agricultural methods?

1. There is a college at Pusa.

Q. There is none in Bengal?

A. Not yet.

Q. Then you don't think that something should be done by Government to spread knowledge by means of the cinema?

A. Government energy and resources could be better spent in other directions. The cinema may be left to private enterprise even for educational purposes.

Q. Has private enterprise hitherto produced a single educational film?

A. No.

Q. When do you expect them to do it? It is not a paying proposition Do you want to leave it to fate to hang for ever?

A. When the Government feels the necessity for imparting knowledge to the people by means of the cinema, they can employ these trained people.

Q. We now want your opinion as public citizens. The Committee has been appointed to explore the possibilities of developing the indigenous cinema industry. I take it you believe in the cinema as a powerful means of education?

A. To some extent, but nothing has been done in this direction either by private agencies or by Government agency.

Q. Do you think that Government should do something for that purpose?

A. The medical department should take up the question of health propaganda, the industries department should take up the question of industrial advancement and so on; they can show the improved methods of handloom and various other things.

Q. Do you think the Industries Department are spreading knowledge about industries sufficiently rapidly?

A. From the reports of the Industries Department I should think they are doing enough.

Q. You don't think anything more should be done by Government?

A. More could certainly be done if funds were available.

Q. But you say that funds should not be spent on this?



A. Funds should be allotted to the Department of Industries, and they should at their discretion allocate them to particular branches of the trade.

Q. There was, I understand, a discussion in your association about this. How many members were present on that occasion?

A. This question was discussed in our executive committee, and about 12 members were present. We discussed not only this particular point, but the whole questionnaire in detail.

Q. Is that the opinion of all the 12 members who were present?

A. Yes. My point is, the Department of Industries is there and it is doing everything necessary to spread knowledge about the industrial side, and I don't see why Government should embark upon such work. I would leave this thing to be done by the Industries Department.

Q. You won't leave it to the Department of Education?

A. We are now discussing the Industries Department. There are certain departments of the Government of India which look after the various departments, like public health, industries and so on, and let each department look after its own needs and requirements.

Q. Do you think that Government should do anything to encourage the growth of the indigenous film industry?

A. They should give some facilities.

Q. Do you advocate the quota system?

A. No, because after all, the cinema industry is not a key industry where people will be prepared to make a sacrifice for the sake of the development of the industry. Take the cotton industry, which is a key industry for the country; it needs all the help from the people and the Government alike, and every possible help will be given to it.

Q. Still you would flood the country with foreign films? Do you know how many crores of rupees worth of foreign films are finding their way into the Indian market?

A. I have considered that aspect, but what can we do?

Q. Don't you think the cinema will spread? Do you know that Indian films are becoming more and more popular?

A. That is why private enterprise which has already accomplished so much should be left to itself to develop further.

Q. Do you think anything more is needed to aid that private enterprise? Don't you advocate a reduction on raw materials?

A. I have said that.

Q. What is it you want?

A. There should be a reduction on all raw materials imported into this country for the purpose of the cinema industry.

Q. Do you want to enhance the duty on imported films?

A. We don't advocate it.

Q. Are you satisfied with the present censorship?

A. No, we are not satisfied with the constitution of the Board.

Q. I am asking you about the films as they are shown?

A. We are satisfied with the censorship exercised over them.

Q. You think the constitution should be altered so as to include more of the non-official Indian element on the Board?

A. Yes. There should be more business men.

Q. How will business men have greater interest in the Censorship Board than the ordinary public or an agriculturist or a lawyer?

A. Business men generally come in contact with the masses and they generally have a better idea of them.

Q. Do you think that a business man is more qualified to sit on the Board of Censors than an educationist?

A. He is more in touch with the masses and therefore his judgment in the matter would be very much valued.

Q. I can understand your saying that the citizens should be largely represented, but why should any particular department of commerce or industry be represented? Why not lawyers or educationists?

A. They are also citizens.

Q. Do you want each film to be examined by the Board or would you leave the examination to a paid staff?

A. That won't meet the case so well.

Q. You suggest that certain facilities should be given in the shape of access to public places to the trade. Would you allow a foreign concern to come to this country and take films?

A. You must give facilities to the indigenous industry and not to foreign concerns. There is no objection to a foreigner coming here and taking pictures, but I do not advocate that Government should help them. The facilities which we have asked for should not be accorded to foreign concerns.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* Still they will be competing with Indian productions?

*Chairman:* Would you advocate registration of film producing concerns?

A. That would restrict the scope for private enterprise.

Q. Now, how are the Government to give facilities to indigenous concerns? Supposing an American comes here and employs you or me. Unless there is some registration, they will say that that business belonged to an Indian. In such circumstances, what is there to guide Government?

A. It is for the Government to find out a solution.

Q. But the Government expects its citizens to help them. After all, you want citizen Government just now, and it is for you to advise Government.

A. Therefore it requires registration of some sort.

*Mr. Purohit:* More often than not these companies will be limited companies. Then before granting permission Government could ask for a declaration.

*Mr. Green:* Leave it at that?

*Chairman:* On an affidavit—or a statement that we are an Indian concern.

A. A sort of set form. As in the Arms circular, you are asked a number of questions and you have got to answer them before you are given any permission at all.

Q. Any way, that is your point of view. You don't want to allow free trade to prevail?

A. No, it should not.

*Mr. Green:* Just for my own information, would you be good enough to explain the relationship between your Chamber of Commerce and the Bengal National Chamber of Commerce?

A. They are separate bodies.

Q. Do they represent different interests, because these other gentlemen are coming to give evidence. Whom do you both represent?

A. Both represent the same bodies and have the same class of membership.

Q. And how many members have you got?

*Mr. Gandhi:* 215.

Q. And they are all merchants, of all sorts?

A. Yes.

Q. How many of them are actually interested in the cinema trade?

*Mr. Purohit:* About 5.

Q. Do the chief film interests in the trade belong to your Chamber?

*Mr. Gandhi:* Yes, they do.

*Mr. Purohit:* They also belong to the Bengal National Chamber. They are members there also. Possibly Mr. Madan is on the executive committee of the Chamber of Commerce.

*Q.* But it belongs to both?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* I take it that you represent different interests?

*A.* We do.

*Q.* And that sometimes there must be differences of view. I only ask this because I find it a little difficult to get a consistent idea of your statement. It seems to me that there are various points in it. If this is the case I am not going to bother you to try and open them up. There are two specific questions. In reply to 13 you say, "owing to the present customs tariff the exhibitor is making small profit....." In other words, there is very little competition?

*A.* There is no competition.

*Q.* Do I understand that you want the custom duty reduced or removed?

*A.* No, on the contrary the first thing that should be done is to remove the amusement tax.

*Q.* Well, the amusement tax is the local Government's affair and the customs duty is Imperial taxation. Do you want them to be reduced?

*A.* If you will look further down you will see that we are definitely against the retention of the duty on imported finished films. We have advocated the removal of the duty on films produced indigenously.

*Q.* You don't want to see it reduced? You want to see it as it is?

*A.* And the duty on the imported raw material taken off.

*Q.* One other question. I see from your answer to No. 35 that you are in favour of stipendiary paid whole time censors with an advisory board, a board to whom they would refer doubtful cases. And you also consider that examination by members of the board itself would be too costly and would not be feasible. I can see that it is more costly. But can you tell me exactly why it is not feasible?

*A.* You see these things are imported and you cannot possibly expect the business man or the person employed in other things of life to go on seeing film after film.

*Q.* I see, you mean the practical difficulty.

*Mr. Neogy:* As regards the model studio which has been suggested, do you think that the greatest difficulty in the way of the improvement of the present Indian industry is want of knowledge on the part of the producer as to what exactly should be done in the matter of setting up a studio?

*A.* More from want of capital.

*Q.* And some of the producers have gone abroad and seen model studios there. So the setting up of a model studio here will not, in your view, be of assistance from that point of view?

*A.* Oh yes.

*Q.* Now, about the possibility of the science college or university opening any class for giving technical instruction in this line. Don't you think that if there is a definite declaration of Government policy in regard to the direction of this industry.

*Chairman:* But they don't want any protection.

*Mr. Neogy:* They may or may not. Supposing the Government were to make a declaration that they were to give definite protection to this industry, and there was an assurance of employment in this line, don't you think the Science College and the University might be moved to open classes in this subject?

*A.* Yes, I should say so.

*Q.* Now, you have said that you are generally satisfied with the pictures that are shown at the present moment. Do you mean to suggest that you are on the whole satisfied with the censorship? Have you any means of knowing what particular scenes are omitted for instance from a particular film? Has any member of the public got that opportunity?

*A.* No.

*Q.* Therefore you don't know what films have been rejected.

*Chairman:* They are published in the gazette.

*A.* They are, but the films are never seen by us, so that the public has no idea as to whether they were justifiably cut or not.

*Mr. Neogy:* When you go to see a picture you are satisfied with it, but that does not mean that you endorse the action of the censors on that film, about which you have no knowledge.

*Chairman:* Who can have that opportunity?—of the one million population. They cannot have that opportunity.

*Mr. Neogy:* I don't know whether you want that answer of yours to be taken as an appreciation of the work of the censors.

*A.* No, we don't.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* Is Mr. Madan on this executive committee that you have just mentioned?

*Mr. Gandhi:* Not on the committee of this Chamber, but of the Bengal National Chamber of Commerce.

*Q.* You say it is more profitable to show Indian films than foreign?

*Mr. Parohit:* Yes, to certain audiences.

*Q.* As regards the absence of co-operation on the part of Government, have you ever asked Government for co-operation and have they ever refused?

*A.* I couldn't mention a definite instance. That is the opinion of the committee. Where for instance a model film has got to be made, we feel that it would be difficult for the Indian producer to get the assistance.

*Mr. Green:* Have you ever tried?

*A.* I am not a producer. I have never tried.

*Chairman:* Natural Indian shyness. They don't want to approach the Government.

*Mr. Green:* You would not like Indians to go abroad with scholarships?

*Mr. Gandhi:* Yes, we have advocated that.

*Q.* You have not advocated it in 17.

*Chairman:* If the university gives it they have no objection.

*Mr. Parohit:* The main point is that we don't want the university to spend any money on this thing.

*Mr. Green:* You don't want Government help?

*A.* Except in the way in which we have asked. The whole question is a comparative one. Whatever money Government can secure for this could naturally be more profitably spent on other things and therefore the committee does not see its way to recommend that Government should spend money on this enterprise.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* Government gets income tax from these theatres. They get some money from the customs tariff. They get money from the amusement tax. If they have got the money, do you advocate this?

*A.* The profits from the customs tariff cannot be allocated to this industry at all.

*Q.* You don't advocate that this should be done.

*A.* The idea is that there are other interests more vital, if Government has the money to spend.

*Q.* You want this money also to be spent in other directions?

*Mr. Gandhi:* At the present time and at the present stage we don't want Government money to be spent.

*Q.* As regards 34 (d), what do you mean by "as at present....." How should such a board be financed from the fees? Some of the boards are not self-supporting and this fee is not enough. If Government is not to pay anything, it would make the board worse than it is.

*Mr. Parohit:* We were not aware of the deficits that Government has to incur on account of these boards.

*Q.* Yes, they are not self-supporting, except Calcutta, Bombay and Raugoon are not self-supporting. Where then is the money to come from?

*A.* In that case Government will have to raise the fee.

*Q.* You are agreeable that the fee should be raised? At present it is Rs. 5 for a thousand feet.

*Mr. Gandhi:* But with the development of the cinema industry there will be so many more films to be examined that there will no longer be a deficit

*Q.* But if there is a deficit?

*A.* Could I know how much deficit. Have you got the figures?

*Q.* Whatever the figure may be, we have to make up the amount

*A.* Well, retrenchment might be suggested in other directions.

*Q.* You think this should be done by retrenchment in other directions

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* No. 40—you say the Press Act is quite adequate for this purpose. In point of fact, the Press Act is only meant for obscene and not for objectionable matter.

*Mr. Parohit:* Under the Press Act there could be a prosecution against obscene advertisement.

*Q.* There are very extremely objectionable films shown and objectionable handbills circulated, but they don't come under the Press Act.

*A.* Is it an advertisement or not? Are advertisements covered by the Press Act or not?

### Written Statement of Mr. J. S. HENDERSON, dated the 21st November 1927.

Part 1 of the questionnaire is concerned with questions relating to the film industry in India, and to the policy to be followed in the case of British Empire films. The questions relating to the former section of this Part are mostly questions which exhibitors and producers are alone competent to answer, and with regard to the second section, the Chamber will no doubt agree that some measure of encouragement to British Empire films is desirable, and will have their own views as to the beneficial results which might be expected from such encouragement.

The Bengal Board of Censors is concerned mainly with Part 2 of the Questionnaire referring to Social Aspects and Control, the questions relative to which I will deal with *seriatim*:—

I consider that there is more than one class of film exhibited in this country which is likely to have a demoralising or otherwise injurious effect upon the public, and that there is a certain number of immoral or criminally suggestive films in circulation. In my opinion the following classes of film are objectionable:—(1) The so-called Sex Problem film, (2) Films of the "Apache" type dealing with the criminal underworld of Paris and other large cities, (3) French Revolution films such as "Orphans of the Storm", "Scaramouche", "Passion", etc., (4) Films purporting to portray fashionable high life in New York, Monte Carlo, etc., with the inevitable midnight carousal scenes they contain, (5) Sordid films concerned

with slum life in low class European and American homes introducing drunken parents and ill-treated children, (6) Cabaret and Night Club Daucing films, (7) Films involving racial and political questions, (8) Films which represent the European in such a way as to tend to lower his or her moral standard in the eyes of the Indian, (9) Films in which vice is made to assume the aspect of virtue and (10) Films of low moral tone generally.

The above classes of films are in general harmful for reasons which are fairly obvious.

I consider that the present censorship, so far as Bengal is concerned, is quite adequate in cases of Sex and Crime films. I imagine that it would be difficult to say whether there has been any definite increase of crime in Bengal due to the cinema, but in my opinion the chances are that there has been an increase. Many films of the Detective and Wild West type, with their display of shooting, stabbing and other acts of violence might, from their very familiarity tend to suggest similar acts to the mind of unbalanced youths. It does not seem improbable for example, that some of the many dacoities and shooting crimes committed in this province may have been suggested by the facility with which these things are done on the film, although in the latter case of course the offenders against law and order are invariably made an example of. It might be asked why, if it is considered that a definite increase of crime in Bengal can be traced to the influence of the cinema, it can at the same time be contended that the present censorship in that province is quite adequate in cases of Sex and Crime films. The answer is, of course, that if all such films were to be definitely banned by the censor there would be little left for the cinema owner to exhibit.

I consider that the differences in social customs and outlook between the West and the East necessitate special consideration in the censorship of films in this country. The Bengal Board of Censors have always endeavoured to give effect to such consideration in all films which come within their purview.

So far as the Bengal Board is concerned, considerable care is taken in censoring films likely to offend anyone's religious susceptibilities, and within the last two years or so the following among other films which come under this category have been taken exception to--"The White Rose", "The White Sister", "After Six Days", "Life of Lord Buddha" and "Moon of Israel". These films were likely to offend Protestants, Roman Catholics, Buddhists and Mahomedans respectively on religious grounds, and in each case complaints were received by the Bengal Board of Censors in regard to them. To take as examples "The White Rose" and "The White Sister": The former deals with a young Presbyterian Clergyman in a small American town who, after betraying a young village girl in his pastorate becomes engaged to a lady in his own station of life, but in the end makes amends by marrying the village girl only after she and her infant have in the interim suffered the greatest privations. In "The White Sister" the hero of the story returns from War after having been reported as killed, to find that the girl to whom he was engaged has in despair renounced the world and become a Nun, in spite of which he continues to press his suit. In this film one or two sacred and intimate scenes of religious ceremonies common to the Roman Catholic Church are shown in full detail, and these were very rightly taken strong exception to.

I consider that certain films exhibited in India have a tendency to misrepresent Western civilisation, or to lower it in the eyes of Indians. An example of this is to be found in a considerable number of American films dealing with fashionable and theatrical life in American and Continental cities, where scenes of midnight revelry and other excesses are almost invariably introduced, and which tend to misrepresent Western life, and in particular to show American or European womankind in an immodest and unfavourable light. There is I think little doubt that such films are generally unintelligible to an uneducated Indian, or are at least largely misunderstood by him. Undesirable results can, in my opinion, hardly fail to follow from

this. The only suggestion I can make on this point would be the obvious one of a stricter censorship, resulting in the excision of all such incidents as I have referred to. This however would mean taking summary action in the cases of perhaps the majority of the films imported into this country with a corresponding hardship on the exhibitor.

I do not know personally of any films exhibited abroad which have a tendency to misrepresent Indian civilisation.

In my opinion certain classes of films shown in this country are likely to have a bad effect on (a) children and (b) adolescents. In the former case I would say that exciting films of the Criminal and Sensational type are harmful to the child mind and that while children may in most cases be too young to understand the full significance of many of the scenes of sexual passion depicted on the screen, it is I think undesirable that they should see them. In the case of adolescents, the ten classes of objectionable film to which reference has already been made, can, in my opinion hardly fail to have a harmful or bad moral effect as the case may be on European or Indian audiences according to the particular objectionable feature which each on the face of it bears.

The Bengal Board of Censors are not unanimous on the question of certifying films as "For Adults only", but the consensus of opinion is against this proposal. I myself consider that while this measure may be desirable in populous cinema-going centres in other countries, such a restriction would scarcely be justified in the case of India. The percentage of children attending the average 6 o'clock or 9-30 performance at any Picture Theatre in Calcutta (including those situated in the Indian quarters of the city) is, I believe, very small, and so far as Indian children are concerned, it may, I think, be said that they in practically every case are accompanied by their parents or guardians who must as a general rule have a fair idea from the posters and advertisements of the type of film they are going to see. For the same reasons I would not be particularly in favour of prohibiting all children below a certain age from visiting cinemas, except for special "Children's Performances".

Question 31 (a) "Do you consider that censorship is an effective method of guarding against misuse of the film?" is not understood. If however the intention is to enquire whether the system of film censorship at present in force is a sufficient safeguard against the exhibition of indelicate and otherwise objectionable films, my answer, so far as the province of Bengal is concerned, is in the affirmative.

I consider that the present system of censorship in Bengal is on the whole very satisfactory, and has been found to work smoothly and well.

I do not consider that a strict censorship would (a) interfere unreasonably with the recreations of the people, (b) involve a falling off in the attendance at cinemas, or (c) unduly interfere with the freedom required for artistic and inspirational development.

Questions 34 to 45 will be dealt with in a further memorandum

### **Supplementary Written Statement of Mr. J. S. HENDERSON, dated the 8th December 1927.**

I do not advocate the replacement of the present Provincial Boards of Censors by a single Central Board, but consider that a Central Board in addition to the Provincial Boards would be a desirable arrangement, and would tend to make for smoother working and for uniformity of practice between the various Boards. I would recommend that such a Central Board should only be required to operate in an appellate capacity, when differences of opinion with regard to the banning or excision of films arose between the Boards. Such a Central Board should, I think, be constituted by the election of one member from each Provincial Board, and I would be inclined to limit the Provincial Boards to three in number, viz., Calcutta,

Bombay and Rangoon. The Central Board would elect their own President and would have power, when settling differences of opinion between the Boards, to co-opt a member or members of any of the Provincial Boards whose special knowledge might help them in coming to a decision where any particular religious, racial or other question was involved. I consider that the Central Board should be situated in Calcutta, which besides being the geographical centre, may also be said to be the centre of Indian Cinematograph interests. With regard to regulating the relationship between the various Boards and the Central and Local Governments, I would recommend that the existing power under Section 7, Sub-Section 7 of the Act be retained. This would mean that the Local Government would retain its powers of decision, such decision to bind all other Boards except with the specific approval of the Central Board, so far as the different provinces are affected. The Provincial Boards should, I think, continue to be financed as formerly, and they in turn might contribute *pro rata* to the finances of the Central Board. As the Central Board would only be required to function as and when occasion might arise, and these occasions are, in the ordinary course, likely to be few, the financing of it should not be a very serious matter.

The present constitution of the Provincial Boards (of which at least half the members must, under the law, be non-official) is on the whole satisfactory, and is, I think, to be preferred to the suggested wholetime, experienced, wellpaid officer as Censor at each centre, assisted by an Advisory Board of non-officials.

So far as the Bengal Board is concerned, the present system under which films are ordinarily examined by Inspectors subordinate to the Board is, I think, quite satisfactory. It must be added however that the Bengal Board are particularly fortunate in possessing an Inspector of exceptional qualifications for the post. A great deal depends upon the perception, judgment, and ability of the Inspector to grasp the essential features of a film and to embody these clearly in his report, and the Bengal Board of Censors recognise that it would be difficult to find an equally able man to take the place of the present Inspector, and that in that case the position might be a different one.

I consider the suggestion that all films should be examined by members of the Board to be quite an impracticable one.

At present the Local Government has power under the Act to prevent the exhibition of a film which may be objectionable locally, although it has been passed by a Board in some other part of India, and this I consider a desirable safeguard.

The Bengal Board of Censors can quote something like thirteen instances within the last few years of films which have been passed by a Board of Censors in one province and found objectionable in another province. A very recent instance is that of the film "The Triumph of the Rat" dealing with the "Apache" and the criminal underworld of Paris, which on being banned by the Bengal Board, was sent over by the exhibitors to Bombay and duly certified for exhibition by the Board there. The Bengal Board have for some time past been greatly exercised by this anomaly, which in itself emphasises the necessity for the inception of a Central Authority to whom the Provincial Boards concerned could appeal for a final ruling in such cases. The proposed Central Board should meet this difficulty.

I do not know of any instances of pictures disapproved of or banned for exhibition in the country of origin or in Great Britain, being exhibited in India.

I consider it very desirable that posters, handbills and advertisements of cinema performances should also be censored. Frequent steps have been taken by the Bengal Board in this respect, and it must be said that the local Cinematograph Proprietors have always shown themselves very willing to act in concert with the Board of Censors in this connection. The Board feel however that its hands ought to be strengthened by specific powers under the Act to censor posters, handbills, etc.



I have noticed a number of objectionable advertisements and posters descriptive in each case of American films. These advertisements describe in sensational language and in terms of very doubtful taste some of the more exciting love-making and other scenes appearing in the film. Most of us I think can recall examples of objectionable posters connected with such films as "Quo Vadis", "She", etc., and with films introducing scenes of cabaret interiors, midnight revelry, etc. Such posters might, I think, be generally considered more harmful than the films themselves.

I am unable to say that I have noticed any appreciable improvement in the moral standard of the films exhibited in India in recent years. In my opinion this is not likely to be brought about by any other means than that of a stricter standard of censorship, and my own view is that some Boards are scarcely as particular in this respect as they might be.

The Bengal Board of Censors have recognised the desirability of co-operating with the trade as far as possible in the matter of censorship. The Managers of the various Cinematograph Theatres in the city have all along been given to understand that the Board will welcome any suggestions they may have to make, and will always be glad to meet them as far as possible. They are aware that wherever the Board can help them in the way of expediting certificates, suggesting excisions or alterations in a film in preference to banning it, or giving them helpful advice on the films they intend to import, they will always do so. The Board have likewise extended an open invitation to any of the Managers to meet the members at the close of each General Monthly Meeting, with a view to discussing their difficulties, and this invitation is taken advantage of.

With regard to the question as to whether there is need for a stricter control over the import or export of films, I do not know, nor have I been able to learn of any instance in which the present comparative freedom from control has been abused.

Public bodies and the Press could, I think, do a good deal to maintain a good standard of films, the former by interesting themselves in the discouragement of films of low moral tone, and other objectionable characteristics, and the latter by constructive criticism of the various films advertised in their Entertainment Columns, in much the same way as is done in the case of theatrical performances.

I would not be in favour of control by Government of film productions. I consider however that all film producing agencies might be registered and licensed, and that the Board should have power to inspect Studios periodically.

In conclusion I would like to emphasise my own particular leaning towards a stricter standard of censorship for all films imported into this country. It has to be remembered however that this would mean shutting out a considerable number of films for which Cinema Proprietors have paid large sums of money, and that a very real hardship would thus be involved. This is a factor which has constantly to be borne in mind in censoring films, and which has very largely restricted the Bengal Board in their endeavours to achieve an entirely satisfactory standard of censorship. It is this particular factor which to my mind will constitute one of the greatest difficulties which the Indian Cinematograph Committee in their deliberations have got to face.

**Oral Evidence of Mr. J. S. HENDERSON of Messrs. Mackinnon, Mackenzie & Co., Calcutta, representing the Bengal Chamber of Commerce, on Wednesday, the 21st December 1927.**

*Chairman:* Was this statement approved by the Bengal Chamber of Commerce?

A. Yes.

Q. At a meeting?

A. I do not know whether it was at a special meeting held for the purpose. I do not think so. It was probably approved at a meeting of the Committee, but I am unable to say.

Q. Are there any people in the Bengal Chamber interested in the film trade?

A. Not that I know of.

Q. Either on the exhibition, importation or distribution side, or otherwise?

A. Not that I know of.

Q. I have just compared your statement with the original throughout and in 3 or 4 places I find there is a reference to the Bengal Board of Censors. I do not really know what you are referring to.

A. Can you give me an instance?

Q. "The Bengal Board of Censors is concerned mainly with Part II of the questionnaire relating to social aspects." That is right. I am speaking there in my capacity as a representative of the Bengal Chamber of Commerce on the Board of Censors.

Q. You say on page 1, "The Bengal Board of Censors are not unanimous on the question of certifying films as for adults only".

A. I am referring there to the Bengal Board of Censors as stated. The statement in question is addressed to the Chamber by me in my capacity as the Chamber's representative on the Board.

Q. And the Chamber has adopted it?

A. Yes.

Q. I see that explains it now. Have you seen "The Rat" yourself?

A. Yes, but not "The Triumph of the Rat".

Q. You think "The Rat" is a thing which could be shown in this country?

A. I do not think it is a desirable type of picture to show, because it deals with the criminal underworld of Paris, portraying European women in a very degrading light, and is of low moral standard. I consider that that type of film in general is not desirable.

Q. So that crime is not committed only by America but by Britain also?

A. Yes. I am not holding a brief for Britain against America.

Q. Apparently all western films on those lines are generally objectionable more or less?

A. Yes. There are several of this type. I have seen two or three myself. I think "The Red Lily" was one and there was another—"While Paris Slept", or some such title—but I have certainly seen two or three, if not more, of that type of film and I do not think they are on the whole desirable.

Q. I may tell you, and it is not a matter now in confidence, because the whole of the Committee have viewed both "The Rat" and "The Triumph of the Rat", and I think their unanimous view is that "The Rat" is more objectionable than "The Triumph of the Rat". Yet "The Rat" has been passed by the Bengal Board of Censors and "The Triumph of the Rat" is banned by them. That is why I asked you about "The Rat". You passed it.

A. As a matter of fact I was not on the Sub-Committee which actually viewed it.

Q. There is more of the underworld there than in "The Triumph of the Rat",—women fighting, tearing each other's hair and throwing each other down.

A. That I think is very objectionable.

Q. We could not understand why "The Triumph of the Rat" was banned when "The Rat" was passed.

A. I have not seen the other one, but I have always given it as my view that that type of film is open to strong objection.

Q. Do you think the cinema will have any value if that type of picture is banned altogether?

A. I do not think it would do the cinema any harm.

Q. Do you think anybody will care to exhibit pictures in this country on those terms?

A. I think so.

Q. I am glad you have seen "The Rat" and I want to be somewhat plain with you. I suppose it reproduces scenes in a large measure from the 'Folies Bergeres'?

A. Yes.

Q. And you know the Folies Bergeres is witnessed by thousands of people every day?

A. Yes.

Q. What is your objection to showing it in India? You and I see it when we go to Paris?

A. My objection is this. I hold that to show such things to people who have never visited the west and have had no actual experience of European habits and customs is very apt to give an entirely wrong impression of moral and other conditions prevailing there.

Q. Did you see what is called "The Black Bottom Revue"?

A. Yes.

Q. You did not hesitate to go there?

A. No, but at the same time I did not think that that was altogether a desirable exhibition.

Q. From the same point of view?

A. Yes.

Q. The west and the east have to come in contact?

A. That is so.

Q. Modern dresses worn by your women we consider to be objectionable, but still we cannot stop them, is that not so?

A. Yes.

Q. The difficulty is where to draw the line?

A. Undoubtedly it is.

Q. From your point of view here, I think we will have to ban many a film which has been passed by both Bengal and Bombay Boards.

A. You will observe I finish my statement by saying that in my opinion I would like to see an even stricter censorship for India. At the same time I recognise that you would thereby be shutting out a considerable number of films and inflicting a considerable amount of hardship on exhibitors.

Q. If they are merely of the comic type or of the fighting type, do you think people will care to go to the cinema,—even you and I?

A. I think so. I know there are many other films of the clean, open-air type—really good films.

Q. Now and then, but sometimes we do want to see some laxity in the strict observance of social etiquette.

A. Yes.

Q. I do not know whether the theatres can be run if you shut out films like "The Rat". I mention it to you boldly.

A. After all, "The Rat" is, as I have said before, only one of a comparatively small number of films in that category.

Q. But under your category it will go. It is the finest British effort I have seen so far, compared with American products.

A. Yes, I agree.

Q. And if you are going to shut out such British efforts on prudish grounds, where is the chance for British industry to thrive in this country?

A. I say there are so many other films to draw upon. By showing more of the clean, open-air and other wholesome types of film, if I may so describe it, I think it is possible to encourage producers to send more of that type here.

Q. You recognise they do not produce for India. India is a very negligible factor with the producer?

A. Yes.

Q. In fact, the producer makes all the profit in his own country and he need not go to any other country at all.

A. Yes.

Q. Then I take it your definite view is that the British standard of censorship should not be adopted in this country?

A. Yes.

Q. Even on moral grounds?

A. Yes.

Q. It is not so much because it is harmful to the people seeing it but more because it gives a mistaken impression of the life of the west?

A. Yes. I base my argument on very much the same grounds as those put forward before the Board by you the last time I appeared here.

Q. If you accept that position, don't you think that that work had better be done in Britain or in the place of origin and not here in India? You know most of the films shown here are also shown in England. England now imports 90 per cent. of her pictures from America, which are of the same class as those which come to this country?

A. I don't know the figures.

Q. Don't you think that Britain will be a better place to stop these productions? Why should she encourage this class of production? There are 4,000 theatres in England whereas we have a very small number. Britain is a very large customer of American and if Britain sets her foot down against these, it will have a wholesome effect?

A. It would help very considerably, provided you could get the right men with the necessary experience.

Q. What I mean is why don't you agitate in England for stopping this sort of stuff rather than agitating in this country?

A. Has there not already been a certain amount of agitation there?

Q. Still the British Board of Censors pass them. For instance, the British Board of Censors has passed "Variety"?

A. Yes.

Q. It is a very good production indeed?

A. It was a bad type of film. It might have been improved by omitting a few scenes but not to the extent of fitting it for exhibition here.

Q. It is such a master-piece in technique that it would be a pity if India were to lose the benefit of viewing it. It might be improved by omissions here and there.

A. If you think it is capable of sufficient improvement.

Q. Yes. After all the artist in this country must see the best of the technical side also. Any way, that is another matter. I am putting to you the difficulties which we feel in this matter so that we may get your assistance. There is a suspicion in the Indian mind that this is more or less a political stunt to shut out these films in order to keep the western glory before the eyes of the eastern. We have to steer clear of such an atmosphere of prejudice. I quite realise the danger of the injury which it may have on our ignorant men. There has been some responsible testimony to that effect so that that is a point of view which every one, whatever the political motive behind it, should respect at the same time without

injuring the trade. The difficulty which I feel is whether this sort of censorship may not kill the trade altogether which is yet in its infancy.

A. I do not think so. Don't you feel perhaps with me that if there was a real desire for this better type of film, free from many of the objections to which you have referred, the producers would eventually meet it?

Q. The European is able to take care of himself in this country, but the Indian is somewhat shy. He is not able to assert himself in the same way as you and I do. For instance, he submits very easily, because he wants to carry on quietly. I do not think it would be safe to leave it in his hands.

A. I was looking at it from the point of view of the exhibitors themselves. If a stricter standard of censorship were brought into force and they realised that the bringing out of certain of these sexual films to this country inevitably involved the danger of their being banned or cut, they would think twice before taking this risk.

Q. It is not merely American, but it is German and British or both?

A. Yes.

Q. Even Britain is not going to adopt the standard which will be acceptable here. Her audience requires a certain kind of stuff?

A. My view is that there are pictures which the exhibitor might bring in if he knew that there was no use attempting to bring those other objectionable films.

Q. You see after all the trade is in the hands of foreign producers whose main purpose is to produce for their own consumption?

A. Supposing the exhibitor here said, "I do not want these films"?

Q. He will have to stop his show.

A. That is on the assumption that he has nothing but the objectionable type of film to show.

Q. Every social drama involves a love affair, you recognise that?

A. Quite.

Q. Some woman must be at the bottom of it? Whether you want amusement or relaxation you have to have a woman in the bargain?

A. I suppose so.

Q. You cannot introduce a western woman in an eastern condition?

A. No.

Q. You cannot make a western woman behave purdah?

A. No.

Q. Or behave in the way in which Indian women do, of not kissing openly?

A. Possibly not.

Q. It would not be western then?

A. No.

Q. If you want a western film it must be on the western lines?

A. Yes.

Q. You cannot have it on eastern lines?

A. No.

Q. You all emphasise the difference in the outlook of the west and the east. What they want to see is the west. They do not want to see the east in a western film, just we do not want to see the west in an eastern film. And unless there is some accentuation or exaggeration of the ordinary bourgeois life in a London street do you think it will attract any crowd in the west or the east? Some sort of extraordinary incident must appear in the novel, or on the screen, and even on the stage for the matter of that. If we adopt your principle I am afraid all these films will cease to have any amusement character at all.

A. I do not think so.

Q. If you shut out "The Rat" and that class of films?

A. After all that is only one type of film and there are not many of that particular type.

Q. The "Triumph of the Rat" gives a very good moral of virtue triumphing. The more you show the ugly surroundings the more valuable is the lesson that it teaches?

A. That is one way of looking at it.

Q. I am afraid you give very little credit to Indian understanding. Don't you think the Indian ryot is shrewd enough to understand it. Is he not ordinarily shrewd?

A. I don't deny that—all I say is that without actual personal knowledge and experience of the west itself the tendency must be to give a wrong impression and to make the Indian imagine that this is the every day type of thing. As a matter of fact, it is not. If you go to Paris you never see any such aspects of Parisian life unless you want to go and look for them. But it would appear to the ordinary and wholly inexperienced Indian mind that this was the usual thing there.

Q. I am struggling against two views on that matter, whether it is not the better view to educate men to these things so that they may get a true perspective. The first shock may indeed be great, but gradually do you not think the more and more they get acquainted with your life—the ordinary man does not think much of your dances now-a-days whereas 30 years ago it was not so. The more he becomes familiar with your modes of life don't you think the less importance he would attach to it?

A. I think that is so to a certain extent, but I still think that without the Western atmosphere, without actually having been in touch, the position is apt to be misunderstood.

Q. I should like to have your opinion on another matter, and that is about a quota system to encourage the growth of Indian films in this country. Would you advocate the compulsory exhibition of Indian films in every cinema provided the Indian film is passed by a Board as suitable for exhibition for all, just as they have done it in England in order to encourage the growth of British production.

A. I would not be in favour of any Government interference but would encourage the production of Indian films in the ordinary way.

Q. This is one method of encouraging their production by creating a supply.

A. As a matter of fact very fine Indian films are already being produced in this country.

Q. But the difficulty is they don't find an adequate market.

A. I did not understand that to be the case. I was told by one of the principal producers here the other day that the only thing they were anxious about was to get Government assistance in the shape of certain facilities for producing their films.

Q. They want capital too in some places.

A. But principally assistance in the way of Government giving facilities for taking films in historical surroundings, and perhaps the use of troops and vessels, or something of that sort. That is what they want. I understand they would welcome that.

Q. What is your idea of the quota system? Don't you think it would encourage the growth of the industry and gradually create a taste for Indian films?

A. I think that as Indian films have already obtained a good foothold here, the thing to do is to encourage them as far as possible.

Q. And will you adopt the same course also for British Empire films in India, or would you advocate a compulsory exhibition of them?

A. I would be inclined to do without Government interference if at all possible.

Q. But you think as regards the granting of these facilities that that is the only way, or would you advocate any reduction in the tariff on the raw products required for producing a film?

A. So far as I have been able to ascertain from talks I have had with some of the Indian producers, they don't appear to be very anxious for Government help other than that already mentioned.

Q. On the other side of India some people are very anxious about these things. No doubt the chief producer here is not anxious about that sort of thing because he is a man of means; but other producers in other parts of the country are anxious to get facilities in that way, specially in Bombay, where they want special financial assistance in the shape of loans on easy terms and longstanding loans.

A. I would say that if there was any real desire evinced by Indians to see more Indian films, then I think it might be done. But I don't think in the meantime there is any particular trend that way.

Q. What is your object in getting these film producing agencies registered. You know that already if they use electrical energy or anything of that sort, under certain Acts they are liable to inspection by the Electrical Inspector.

A. Even as the cinema houses are, but that is not sufficient.

Q. Even the producing agencies where they use electricity or electrical apparatus or something of that sort, would they not come under the Factories Act and other things?

A. That I cannot say.

Q. But what is your object? Do you think it would be wise to undertake this periodical inspection—which must be by ill-paid officers who are likely to harass these people?

A. I think it would be a desirable thing.

Q. It has been suggested that these facilities that Government should give for the film industry in the country should be confined to Indian-owned concerns in the sense in which it is accepted, for instance, in the case of steel or any other industry where protection is given—that is, with Indian capital, with the majority of Indian management and shareholders. It is only to such concerns that aid should be given by Government. If any protection is given (protection or any facilities such as the use of troops, the loan of forts, etc., for the taking of films)—would you agree that preference should be given only to Indian-managed concerns?

A. I think all these concerns are already Indian managed.

Q. But I mean supposing there is also an American, English or German concern—and a German concern is already in the field to-day taking films—do you think such facilities and any encouragement we give should be confined to agencies of the sort I have just mentioned, not entirely Indian but majority Indian?

A. I certainly think that might be done.

*Colonel Crawford:* In the production of educational films you, as the representatives of the Chamber of Commerce, are definitely against Government producing them.

A. Yes.

Q. The production of public utility films is not a commercial proposition for producing companies; and yet there is a general opinion that Government should do much more in the way of education by means of the cinema. It comes down to this then. How are those films to be produced—(a) by private agency or (b) by Government itself? Would you advocate that Government should invariably call for contracts for the production of public utility films?

A. I prefer (a), production by private agency under Government supervision or with Government help.

Q. You mean call for tenders from producing companies or can they produce themselves?

A. I would call for tenders from those who are already in the field and whose business it is to produce.

Q. The first effort should be to call for tenders? Is there any limitation to that? Because it appears possible that all the producers to-day cannot comply with the entertainment demand and therefore they will charge you for their public utility films the amount they are able to get on their entertainment films.

A. Who would charge you?

Q. The producer tendering. He can use the whole of his studio for turning out entertainment work which gives him considerable profit. If he takes up Government work he is likely to charge a very much higher rate than is actually necessary because he is using up his time.

A. He is not in the least likely to raise his rates to the extent of shutting out that type of work. I think there would always be that safeguard.

Q. I see in your statement that you definitely say you are satisfied with the censorship of the Bengal Board. I presume that is in general terms so far as their policy is concerned?

A. Yes.

Q. Well we have had instances of a film like "The Merry Widow" which struck the Committee as one which might have had further censoring. We have had instances also of a film like "The Triumph of the Rat" which you turned down but which it appeared to us might have gone through. It is possible, I suppose, that films which you don't approve of or scenes which you don't personally approve of, do occasionally slip through under the present state of censorship.

A. Yes, I think that is so.

Q. Can you suggest any method whereby that leakage, so to speak, might be checked.

A. Well at present our system is fairly adequate in that way, because every member of the Board has an opportunity of seeing every film, and if each member is really doing his duty and seeing every film he is asked to see as well as others at his own instance, things like that should not slip through.

Q. I notice you refer again to the necessity of some central authority and previously it was definitely stated that it should be only of an appellate nature. I rather gather from your remarks now that it should also be of a co-ordinating character, that it might endeavour to co-ordinate the working of the Bombay, Madras and Calcutta Boards and get some uniformity of practice.

A. If that could be done, so much the better. That is one of the drawbacks of the present system—the want of cohesion between the different boards. If you had a central authority, which would tend to draw the different boards together and to get a more uniform standard of censorship, then I say so much the better.

Q. Now I notice that you yourself are not satisfied with the standard of story as shown in the films to-day. You say you would cut them all out but for the fact that you would destroy the trade. Now you would be interested in encouraging a better type of story?

A. I think in my remarks to the Chairman I intended to rather stress that point. It seems to me that if you did encourage the standard of story to be raised, you would in the ordinary course obtain it—as there was a real demand for a better type, the supply would be forthcoming.

Q. I am under the impression that production has been in the hands of men whose culture has not been exceedingly high.



A. I think possibly you are quite right.

Q. We had a suggestion to-day and I would like to know how far you consider it practical—that a Board of Censors might have a cultural sub-committee who would grade films on an aesthetic basis and say “Yes that film we are going to call A. This is an ordinary film, we don’t want to ban it; we will call it B”; and then give some preference to exhibitors showing a programme of A films. It is something in the nature of positive censorship instead of the present negative censorship.

A. And they would be without power to interfere with the Board’s decision?

Q. Yes. It would be simply a cultural body.

A. I think that would be an excellent thing. One so often hears people saying that they don’t think this or that should have been allowed to be shown. If you could get such people to really interest themselves in what should be shown and to help the Boards with their recommendations it would be an excellent thing.

Q. And in encouraging the higher type of story.

A. So much the better. I should imagine any Censorship Board would welcome any assistance of that nature.

Q. Do you think that the police really should have a place in censorship or should their connection with censorship be something apart from actual censorship? I mean the police have special powers now, or the District Magistrate, to take such action as is necessary for the maintenance of law and order. Do they also need a place on the Board of Censors?

A. I do not say that they need it and I should not say it was absolutely essential, but considering that the cinema is more or less connected with the powers which the Police already have in the matter of obscene pictures and others which offend against public morals and come within the scope of the Penal Code, it seems rather appropriate that the Police should have a place on the Board.

*Chairman:* But why should they occupy such prominent positions as President of the Board and Secretary?

A. That is not entirely necessary.

*Colonel Crawford:* We have found that the film producer is undoubtedly handicapped owing to communal tension in this country. The police officer will always take a safe line, whereas public opinion might take broader lines. I was wondering from that point of view whether it would not be better to have a Board representative of public opinion and leave your police with special powers.

*Chairman:* You don’t mean leave the police out altogether?

*Colonel Crawford:* If powers are necessary for the police they should be entirely separate from the powers exercised by the Board.

*Chairman:* I mean if he is one of the members of the Board it would avoid future complications. But a policeman as Secretary and President—the whole thing is at present associated with the police.

A. My reply to that is that I don’t consider it necessary that they should be associated with the Board to the extent they are, but I think if anything it is desirable.

*Colonel Crawford:* Then you will have some association?

A. Yes.

Q. In replying to the Chairman on the question of British Empire films I gathered you said that they should be allowed to make their way themselves. Would you suggest it is advisable to keep an open market for foreign films—that is, not to allow any foreign country to secure a monopoly of films showing in this country?

A. I certainly think that if that could be brought about it would be a good thing.

*Q.* It is possibly difficult to think of any practical method of doing it but you would rather keep the field open for competition?

*A.* Yes.

*Mr. Coatsman:* Towards the end of your statement you say "In conclusion I would like to emphasise my own particular leaning towards stricter censorship". Well, in reply to the Chairman you said that you realised, of course, that the Indian market is a very small affair to the foreign producer. Does not that fact rather limit the scope of possible improvement in the standard of censorship. What I mean to say is first of all the foreign producers do not really care about the Indian market, it is so much money for jam, and secondly the system of "block" and "blind" booking makes it impossible for our importers to pick and choose freely, so what are we to do about it?

*A.* I think I wind up my statement by saying it is one of the biggest difficulties the committee have got to face.

*Q.* That is, approaching it from another angle, I take it you see very few scenes—certainly not whole films—which you would regard as definitely obscene?

*A.* Undoubtedly, yes.

*Q.* Very few?

*A.* Very few.

*Q.* Of course the peculiar medium in which the film producer has to work makes it necessary for him to exaggerate action; where you could get the effect by writing in a book or play, you have to do it by action in a film?

*A.* That is so.

*Q.* So that it is not so much definite obscenity or indecency that we have got to combat but, shall we say, the cumulative aphrodisiacal effect of these exaggerated love-scenes. That is the real problem?

*A.* Indelicacy I think I would call it.

*Q.* Can you remember any film you have seen recently to which you have objected or to any part of which you have objected?

*A.* Yes, quite a number. I think they were American films in nearly every case.

*Q.* Could you mention the name of one.

*A.* I am afraid I can't remember at the moment but in the film I have in mind there is one of those midnight revelry scenes to which I have already referred showing scantily attired girls and intoxicated men in attitudes of very doubtful propriety.

*Chairman:* That appears in "The Rat".

*A.* Well, that type of thing I think is objectionable as well as these "close-ups" of kissing undressing scenes, etc., which I consider extremely so.

*Mr. Coatsman:* What I wanted to get at was if you could remember the name of one particular film, then you might remember exactly what you objected to and exactly what improvements or excisions you would make.

*A.* There is one particular film I have in view but I can't recall it at the moment.

*Q.* I will tell you what my experience is. I wonder if you would agree with this. I am old enough to remember the first picture that was ever shown in the year of grace 1898—that is 30 years ago. In those days the only things that were shown were street scenes and trains coming into the station. Then you gradually got comics; then you got more or less picture versions of plays; and gradually we worked up to the point where every picture has got to include this strenuous kissing and this violent hugging to which you object.

*A.* That is so.

*Q.* Well, we are sliding down a greasy slope and the thing is going to be worse and worse.

A. That is why my view in general is and always has been that the Board are better to err if any thing on the safe side.

Q. Well, now you would agree to this, that the inclusion of more Indians on the Board would lead to a stricter censorship?

A. I do not think it would. My experience has been that the Indian gentlemen on the Board are inclined to be considerably more lenient than myself.

*Mr. Neogy:* I think you have seen some Indian films?

A. Yes, only a short time ago I saw a very good one "Durgesh Nandini".

A. I think it a most excellent production.

Q. Now do you think a European audience in Calcutta would care for these films?

A. I don't think the average European audience are specially interested in Indian history. I am myself; but after all such a film as I have mentioned is in an altogether different category to the type of film which the European ordinarily sees, and I don't suppose many Europeans have read Bankim Chunder Chatterjee's books or take the interest in these subjects that I myself happen to do. If they did they would appreciate such pictures and turn out to see them. In my own view however I do not think you could depend on any appreciable degree of European patronage.

*Chairman:* Because the quality is not very high?

A. Oh no. From the point of view of quality also, I consider the film in question is of a high standard. It is excellently produced, well acted and the photography was, I thought, extraordinarily good. I thought so much of it that I wrote to Madans congratulating them on their achievement.

*Mr. Neogy:* Supposing films of that quality were to be shown for 5 or 6 minutes in every theatre at each performance would there be any falling off in the European audience?

A. I don't think so. But you could not do it in 5 or 6 minutes.

Q. I mean a quota of 5 per cent. I am dividing that up per day. Supposing there were an Indian topical film, which would take say about 6 minutes each day, the quality is not so poor that you could not stand such a film for the length of 6 minutes.

A. I think the quality is extraordinarily good.

Q. It was said the quality was so poor that the European audience would never stand it.

A. I don't agree with that.

Q. Of course you have your views about the quota. You don't want any compulsion. I quite understand your attitude. Now in your written statement you say "The Chamber will no doubt agree that some measure of encouragement to British Empire films would be desirable". What shape do you think such encouragement should take?

A. Are you referring to European or Indian films?

Q. To British Empire films.

A. I think that is more a question for the trade themselves to answer.

Q. One of the points which we have got to examine is what measures can be adopted in order to give encouragement to British Empire films, as a Chamber of Commerce your assistance would be helpful in understanding this point.

A. Well, the encouragement might take the shape of granting facilities for producing these films, in the way of the occasional loan of troops, the use of historical places and surroundings and so on.

Q. And India also should have similar facilities in other parts of the British Empire, facilities for exhibition and facilities for production?

A. Yes, if they want them.

Q. You don't advocate any preferential tariff for the benefit of Empire films?

A. Meantime I think all films are subject to customs duty?

Q. Yes, they are, at a uniform rate, no distinction being made between British and American films.

A. I would be inclined, I think, to give preference in the shape of a reduced customs duty on British Empire films.

Q. Now in so far as British films or films from other parts of the Empire would, under your scheme, come in at a less rate of duty than American films, would not they be in a position to compete more successfully with Indian films in India?

A. You mean American films?

Q. American films would be coming out at a higher rate, British films at a lower rate; and then there would be competition between the Indian films produced here in India and the British films and in so far as you reduce the import duty in favour of British films, would not the competition be keener between Indian films and British films than between Indian films and American films?

A. You would appear to lay particular stress on competition but it seems to me that what is really going to dominate the situation is the inherent merits of the Indian film itself. That is going to be the deciding factor, i.e., whether they are first class films and films which are going to appeal to cinema audiences. It seems to me it is solely a case of their own merits.

Q. But let us assume that the merits are equal. In so far as the duty will be less in the case of British films, the competition will be keener with the British films, so under your scheme the Indian film industry stands to gain very little. As a matter of fact it will be faced with a keener competition.

A. To begin with you would pretty effectively tend to shut out American film competition.

Q. How does that benefit the Indian film industry?

A. By shutting out American competition, you at least limit the field; and it is then a question of the Indian film proving its own work. If they are good films, attractive films, people will go to see them.

Q. That is to say, you would produce circumstances in which the British film would be in a position to drive out American films and then you would expect the Indian film to stand competition with British films.

A. I say they always will stand competition with British films, provided people here really want films dealing with Indian subjects. I have already indicated that, in my opinion, the Indian film has little to learn in the matter of production and photography. The question must in the long run be one of public taste and if the indigenous film cannot stand on its own legs in this respect, then it seems to me no amount of legislation or bolstering up by Government is going to alter the position. The photography is already excellent, and possibly the only thing required is a slight improvement in finish and technique. If that is effected, the Indian film should get its fair share of public patronage.

Q. Don't you think that British productions are likely to be far superior in merit to Indian productions in the near future?

A. That I can't say.

Q. The exhibitor will find it cheaper to show a British film than an Indian film. So you will only be substituting one film for another, and the Indian will go to the wall?

A. If the public really want a particular class of film, they will have it.

*Q.* But the evidence is that a section of the Indian people go to see western films because their technique is superior, and so long as the British film is superior, there will be that competition.

*A.* Then supposing you encourage the production of Indian films by the importation of experts in technique, India should be able to produce even better films.

*Q.* Till the technique is improved up to the British standard, there will be an unequal competition?

*A.* After seeing the film called "Durgesh Nandini", to which I have already referred, I could not say that it could be considered inferior in any pronounced way to the average American or British production.

*Chairman:* I suppose you are aware that the exhibitor is afraid of showing it in the west end, because he tells us definitely that if he introduces Indian films there or in the Elphinstone Picture House, the audiences will go away?

*A.* That might be so for the simple reason that there is history behind this particular film. This is a film which deals with history, and unless Indian history is appreciated by these audiences, the chances are that you will not get larger audiences.

*Q.* Would you advocate such a thing on a reciprocal agreement that for every foot of British Empire film that India takes, the Empire should take a certain quantity of Indian film. Would you advocate it on such a basis?

*A.* I don't think it would be possible, unless Britain showed a particular desire for these films. In Great Britain, Indian films, if well produced, should I think draw very good audiences, because people over there are very interested in India and in Indian history generally.

*Q.* The evidence on that point is not very hopeful.

*A.* The evidence lies here. Not very long ago there was an Indian produced film called "The Light of Asia", and I understand it was very well patronised there.

*Chairman:* It was not shown in the best part of London; no theatre showed it.

*A.* I would be very surprised to hear that a film like that did not do quite well there.

*Q.* I don't know who can enlighten us further on that matter. The evidence on that point is very indefinite.

*Mr. Neogy:* Now, the Bengal Chamber of Commerce has got a right to elect a representative to the Board of Censors. I do not know if you are aware that Mr. Villers who gave evidence on behalf of the European Association said that it is the European Association, and not the Trade Association and the Bengal Chamber of Commerce, that should have a right to elect a representative on the Board. Further more, he says there should be a larger proportion of Indians on the Board. Do you think that the Bengal Chamber of Commerce, as a Chamber, has got much to do with the censorship question? You are not interested in the trade?

*A.* The Bengal Chamber of Commerce may be said to represent possibly the largest and the most influential body of European public opinion in Calcutta which seems to me a very good reason why they should have a seat on the Board of Censors.

*Q.* And there is a rival claim from the European Association?

*A.* That is a question for the two bodies themselves. There seems to be no particular reason why the European Association should have a place on the Board any more than the Bengal Chamber of Commerce. Practically the same body of opinion is represented by each.

**Written Statement of the Bengal National Chamber of Commerce,  
dated the 5th December 1927.**

**INTRODUCTORY.**

1. The Committee of the Chamber have no special knowledge of or connection with the Cinematograph Industry either in India or abroad, but they have carefully studied the development of this Industry in India from its slender beginning to its present state.

**GENERAL.**

2. (a) The Cinemas are frequented in larger numbers by Indians of the educated classes than by the illiterate classes. The attendance of the former is on the increase. This refers specially to Calcutta.

(b) Cinemas in the Indian quarters are patronised by Indians only while those of the European quarters have a mixed audience, the majority being Europeans.

(c) As far as the Committee can ascertain the proportion of children under 14 or adolescents of impressionable age is about 20 per cent. of the whole audience.

**PART I.**

*Film Industry in India.*

3. Films most popular with Indian audiences are Serials, Wild West dramas, with plenty of action and Indian subjects in general, big spectacular films draw crowded houses.

4. The catering for educated Indians may be considered to be adequate but the masses cannot follow films which are not Indian unless plenty of action is put in.

5. The output of Indian pictures is not satisfactory. Indian produced films depicting Indian life with characteristic Indian scenery are not readily available to exhibitors.

(a) They are seldom of superior quality.

(b) Though popular with purely Indian audiences they do not draw Europeans.

(c) It is certainly more profitable to show an Indian film to an Indian audience. Among successful Indian films may be mentioned Jay Dev, Krishna Kanta's Will, Ramayan, Vishnu Avatar, Gauka Dahan, Mahavarat, Patni Pratap, Harish Chandra, Bilwamangal, etc.

6. (a) Films of Indian life, topical Indian news and scenes depicting stories from national literature, history and mythology would be more popular with Indian audiences than the majority of Western films.

(b) While historical or other films appeal to the educated classes mythological films appeal to all sections of Indians.

7. No difficulty is experienced in obtaining suitable films for exhibition to the British troops but Indian troops can only follow Serials, Wild West dramas and Indian films. The ill-paid Sepoy, however, can ill-afford to indulge in the luxury of frequenting Cinemas.

8. (a) The present condition of the Industry in India in its several branches of production, distribution and exhibition is by no means satisfactory.

(b) The difficulties may be classified as follows:—

- (1) Production:—Absence of willingness on the part of the Government and Public Departments to help the producer with facilities for staging scenes in which Railway trains, Steamers, Aeroplanes, Soldiers, etc., are necessary. With these must also be mentioned the absence of studios and studio arrangements.

- (2) **Distribution**:—Absence of facilities offered by Railways and Steamship Companies for the carriage of films, parties of actors, and Cinema equipment in general in the shape of concessions.
- (3) **Exhibition**:—Want of protection against film piracy. Exhibitors holding exclusive rights of exhibition on films for which heavy royalties have been paid have often to suffer serious loss on account of unscrupulous people importing used prints.

9. The amount of good Indian films is far from satisfactory. This is due, as we have said before, to want of up-to-date studios and studio equipments. As a rule good American films are obtainable at reasonable prices. British films which are up to the standard cost much more than American films. As the public are good judges of pictures the demand for American films far exceeds the British. It cannot be gainsaid that British manufacturers are making equal progress with Americans and Germans in the production of really good films.

There is no monopoly of exhibitions or films in India. In Calcutta, besides the Cinema houses run by Messrs. Madan Theatres, Ltd., we have the Globe and Purna Theatres and there is no bar to other houses being built.

10. If the pictures are interesting and attractive a certain amount of "Block" booking may be necessary with a view to keep the various theatres situated close to one another going. "First run" or "Key" theatres are not non-existent in India.

11. In this country exhibitors have sufficient facilities for pre-viewing films. Under the existing circumstances the Committee of the Chamber have no suggestion to make on the matter.

12. It is needless to say that the abolition of the Amusement Tax would attract more people to the Cinemas. The Committee of the Chamber are aware that the imposition of the Amusement Tax was recommended to find funds to make primary education free and compulsory in the province. This has not been done and since the tax has been taken off the theatres it is difficult to see how retention in the case of Cinemas can be justified. Considering the expenses Cinemas have to incur this differential treatment seems unjustified.

13. The profits of the exhibitor have dwindled because of the present Customs Tariff on imported films.

The present Customs Tariff hardly serves the purposes of promoting the indigenous production of films as there are people who would insist on seeing Western films while it would certainly take a long time to have a sufficiently full stock of Indian films for the Cinema-going public in India. A lower Tariff on materials connected with the Film Industry would be a welcome relief and much appreciated by those connected with the Industry.

14. An increased use of the Cinema for educational purposes in schools and for adult education in Agriculture, Public Health, etc., by Government or agencies would be appreciated.

15. Conditions in this country are very favourable to development of an Indian film-producing industry on a large scale. Climatic conditions, beautiful natural scenery, ancient forts, towering temples, huge mosques, etc., all these combined with cheap service of all kinds would make the development of the industry in India easy. Only the co-operation of the Departments of Government and the investing of more capital are wanting.

16. It cannot be said that at present there are Indian producers, actors, actresses and scenario writers of sufficient technical knowledge, enterprise, resource and adaptability on whom the country can depend for a substantial output of films of real competitive exhibition value. More money must be put in the Industry and schools should be founded for training up men as has been done in America and Europe. In the initial stage experts may be imported from abroad for training up Indians who would gradually replace foreigners. In any case the expenditure must be considerable.

17. It would take time for sufficient capital to be forthcoming for film-production industry.

18. Suitable action can be taken by Government in lowering Customs Tariff on imported articles and rendering such help to the producer as has been spoken of in reply to question No. 8.

19. From what has been said before it will be evident that the cost of film production in this country is far less than that in other countries.

20. (a) The Committee of the Chamber have no proposals to make involving expenditure from Government funds.

21. It is not desirable that with the exception of propaganda films connected with the Departments of Agriculture, Education, etc., the Government should incur the liability of controlling the legitimate amusements of the people in spending large sums for it. Existing safeguards seem to be sufficient and satisfactory. As it is we are opposed to monopoly.

#### *Films of the British Commonwealth.*

22. India's participation in the policy outlined in the Resolution of the Imperial Conference would hardly help India.

23. (a) Cinema pictures are not likely to be very useful in making known the conditions, resources and habits of the people, and activities of the various Governments of the British Commonwealth of Nations to each other.

(b) The Committee have no suggestions to make.

#### **PART II.**

#### *Social aspects and Control.*

24. (a) The Committee consider that no class of films at present exhibited in this country has a demoralising or otherwise injurious effect upon the public.

(b) There is no general circulation of immoral or criminally suggestive films.

(c) The question does not arise.

(d) Censorship in the case of "sex" films and "crime" films is adequate. The Committee do not consider that there has been any increase in crime in the province due to the Cinema.

25. The differences in social customs and outlook between the West and the East may necessitate in a small measure special consideration in the censorship of films in this country but existing censoring arrangements amply cover such cases.

26. (a) Care should be taken in censoring films likely to offend religious susceptibilities.

(b) As far as the Committee are aware the film "Moon of Isreal" had to be withdrawn at Delhi because of the unreasonable objection of Mohamadans. It was an Austrian film and no objection was taken to it in other parts of India.

27. (a) The Committee are not aware of films being exhibited in India which have a tendency to misrepresent Western civilization or to lower it in the eyes of Indians. Hardly are films representing Western life misunderstood by the educated Indians. The majority of the audience seeing Western films are sufficiently intelligent not to form incorrect impressions.

(b) The Committee have no information on this point.

28. The Committee do not think that in India films are permitted to be shown which can have a bad effect on children and adolescents.

29. The Committee are not in favour of certification of certain films for adults only.

30. The Committee cannot endorse the idea of prohibiting all children between a certain age from visiting Cinemas except for "Children's Performances".



31. Censorship is certainly an effective method of guarding against misuse of the film.

32. The Committee would like to see a broad-minded Indian and not a member of the Police force appointed censor. Only an Indian can understand which films would have a demoralising or otherwise injurious effect upon the Indians.

33. (a) (b) and (c) A strict censorship is likely to interfere unreasonably with the recreation of the people and involve a falling off in the attendance at Cinemas and unduly interfere with the freedom required for artistic and inspirational development.

34. The Committee do not advocate the replacement of the present Provincial Boards of Censors by a single Central Censor Board. They would support the proposal to have two Boards, one at Calcutta and another at Bombay.

35. The constitution of the Board should be changed and the majority of members should be non-official Indians preferably from public bodies.

36. The present system under which films are ordinarily examined by Inspectors subordinate to the Board would be satisfactory provided the right man is appointed. A broad-minded Indian with knowledge of the world and strong common sense is required.

37. (a) and (b) There are adequate safeguards under the Act for presenting the exhibition of a film which may be objectionable locally although it has been passed by the Board in some other part of India and fresh safeguards are not needed.

38. Yes.

39. No.

40. Posters, handbills and advertisements of Cinema performances need not necessarily be censored.

41. The Committee are not competent to express any opinion on this point.

42. With a view to secure the co-operation of the trade in the matter of censorship the Committee suggest the inclusion of men connected with the trade in the Advisory Board.

43. (a) Stricter control over the import and export of films should be maintained.

(b) Pirated copies of films should not be allowed to be imported.

(c) The censor should not certify such pirated films.

44. The usual right of public criticism would go a long way to keep up a standard in films.

45. (a) Control need not be exercised by Government over film-production.

(b) It is not necessary that film producing agencies should be registered and licensed and their studio should be periodically inspected. The Indian should not be deprived of his inherent right to control his amusement.

**\*Oral Evidence of Mr. T. C. GOSWAMI, M.L.A., representing the Bengal National Chamber of Commerce, on Wednesday, the 21st December 1927.**

*Chairman:* You represent the Bengal National Chamber of Commerce?

A. Yes.

Q. What is the Indian Chamber and Bengal National Chamber? What is the difference between the two?

A. I do not know if it would be proper for me to speak on it. I am a member of both Chambers. This is an older one. I believe there are personal reasons.

*Q.* Was your memorandum approved by a committee of your Chamber?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* What is the membership of your Chamber?

*A.* I could not tell you that.

*Q.* Do you really think the amusement tax is a burden at all? It is not levied on the lowest class seats?

*A.* Personally, I am not against amusement tax, but the opinion in the committee was that it should be abolished.

*Q.* What is your view as to the increase of tariff on foreign films uniformly so as to encourage the growth of indigenous films including British?

*A.* I think if there is a definite movement to encourage the film industry here, we may have to resort to that course. But generally speaking, I am not inclined to high tariffs, but that is a personal view.

*Q.* Your Committee seems to think that the present tariff acts as a deterrent to the industry, see paragraph 13?

*A.* That is from the exhibitor's point of view.

*Mr. Green:* Does it not represent the view of your Chamber? You are definitely in favour of a lower tariff?

*A.* From the exhibitor's point of view. I suppose there are members who are interested in the showing of films, apart from producers.

*Chairman:* What is your Chamber's view in the matter?

*A.* It is given here.

*Q.* Do you really think that we ought to advise a reduction of tariff on foreign films?

*A.* Personally, I would not advise that, but from the exhibitor's point of view it may be profitable to him. That is why I prefaced my answer by saying that if you have a definite movement to encourage the growth of the film industry in this country, you may have to resort to that course.

*Q.* Don't you think that efforts should be made to encourage the indigenous film industry?

*A.* Yes. There is a growing demand for Indian films among the Indian population.

*Q.* What will be your Chamber's view about the quota system?

*A.* I have no idea as to what the Chamber's view is. My view is that it would be a means of encouraging the Indian film industry. Of course, the quota system has got to be worked in a way which is workable, i.e., Indian films certified as suitable by a good Board must be fit for all, and then there should be a gradual rise in the proportion. I would certainly welcome such a thing as an indirect aid to the industry.

*Q.* I suppose you believe in the cinema as a great educational factor for the masses for educating them in public health, industries, modern methods, education and so on?

*A.* That has already been proved in India and so I would advocate its use as much as possible.

*Q.* There are two conflicting views on that point. One school of thought urges that Government should start a studio of their own for producing such films, and another school of thought advances the view that they should merely subsidise the existing producing agencies for that purpose?

*A.* Can there be a conflict of views here because Government can really start their own studio and at the same time subsidise the existing producing agencies as well.

*Q.* It has been said that it does not pay the producers to make these public utility films, and they find it more paying to make entertainment films. Amusement films are made in the present studios and they are fully occupied, and they might take to producing these public utility films, if they are asked to do so, as a side show?

A. There is this danger in Government producing these films,—they will produce in lots even unnecessary films for the simple reason that they will have one department for it and it will be to the interest of the people or staff concerned to keep it going. The initiative may in some cases be taken by other organizations than Government in the matter of education.

Q. You must be familiar with Bengal. There is not one private studio worth the name which can produce these films. Of course, Madans are just starting a studio of their own, but they are just, what you may call, scrapping the surface. Don't you think that Government should establish a model studio for the benefit of people who are interested in the industry?

A. Yes.

Q. There is also a conflict of view there. If the Government had a studio or studios of their own for making educational films, there will be the provincial peculiarities coming in. There is also the suggestion that experts should be employed in those studios to train young men in the particular trade attached to the school. I mean teach young men photography, direction and similar things?

A. I think so.

Q. You mean there should be a common Board which will be a Board of advice for the development of the film industry on proper lines?

A. That is the idea. But I would rather confine the Government studio to the production of educational films; they should not produce any amusement films. Their experts should be available to private agencies. There should be vocational classes attached, where people could get instruction in various technical matters like direction, photography and other things. Such a thing is likely to be useful.

Q. Having regard to the lack of enterprise on the part of the people, can you trust private industry to do these things?

A. I would not generalise for the future, but for the present there is a lack of initiative, and I am for a Government studio.

Q. It is not suggested that the existing concerns may not be able to carry out the orders, but they will have to do so under great difficulties?

A. Yes.

Q. What is your view as regards the financial aid which may be given to this industry, by way of giving long standing cheap loans. Do you think that Government should embark upon such a course?

A. Personally, I don't think it would be an advisable course, because any industry would then claim some sort of assistance. The industry should stand on its own legs, on its own merits. The incentive for effort will disappear, but indirect facilities might be given by way of tariff and other things.

Q. Then you don't believe in loans being given to industries? That is done in Australia and other countries.

A. But then there is a danger of favouritism too.

Q. I don't know if you have seen the proceedings of the Imperial Conference on which so much comment is made. Probably you may like to see them. (A copy was handed to the witness). What do you think of it?

A. What is feared is perhaps American monopoly.

Q. America takes up 90 per cent. of the trade in every part of the country.

A. I don't think from the point of view of India, it matters whether England has the monopoly or America has it.

Q. But Indian films occupy such a small place. Don't you think in that sense we should put forth every effort?

A. I cannot say anything about reciprocal arrangements, because that will not operate. I don't think there will be a demand on a commercial scale for Indian films abroad. That is my feeling.

*Q.* Still why do you say here that the cinema is a powerful factor in getting known to each other?

*A.* The cinema has even been used for propaganda. I remember about 3 or 4 years after the end of the war there was an Association called the English Speaking Union which started exhibiting films about India. The pictures were grossly exaggerated, in fact they were almost libellous. That was in America.

*Q.* Where were they produced?

*A.* The photographs were taken in India but under ridiculous circumstances. They would get a band of savages and undress them so that they were nearly naked. Such photographs were exhibited abroad.

*Mr. Green:* What is the name of the film? Did you see it yourself?

*A.* I saw it in all the papers in England.

*Mr. Coatsman:* How long ago was this?

*A.* Between 1920 and 1922.

*Q.* Have you got any cuttings?

*A.* No.

*Chairman:* You say in your statement in reply to No. 23 (a) the cinema pictures are not likely to be very useful in making known the conditions and habits of the people to each other. I was rather surprised at that statement. Why do you say that? For instance, take the modern methods of agriculture in Canada and Australia. Why do you say that if such films are exhibited here they will not be useful?

*A.* I really did not know what the committee had in mind.

*Q.* There are several points which can be brought out in order to add to our knowledge?

*A.* I would take this statement with a lot of reservation personally.

*Q.* I want you to consider it as an Indian parent or as an elder brother. Do you think that the films which are shown here have any demoralising effect on the youth of this country?

*A.* It is very difficult for me to answer that. I don't understand why these films should have any demoralising effect on the youth of this country. I find very great difficulty in answering, because I know the west fairly intimately and I cannot judge. But I remember the time when I did not know England and students in schools and colleges here used to go to cinemas much more frequently than now. I don't think that had any degenerating effect on them nor on me.

*Q.* That is the fear expressed by the greatest man in India. He says that the cinema is all baneful and that he does not see any good in it?

*A.* Do you mean Mahatmajee? I cannot look at the question from a saint's point of view. But as an ordinary human being I really don't think it has a baneful effect, for this reason that the class of people who go to the cinemas know more or less the habits and ways of the westerners.

*Q.* Still you would say that those passionate kissing scenes, all over the body, won't have any baneful influence? Don't you think it is better to avoid such scenes in our country?

*A.* I don't think so. It is probably difficult for me to speak. It makes no impression on me unless it is positively obscene. But that would strike an Englishman just as much as an Indian.

*Q.* For instance, some of those pictures like rising from water and hanging together, some of them almost naked, do you think it is desirable to show such pictures?

*A.* I think very much more objectionable pictures can be seen in theatres. I mean very suggestive scenes can be seen, which are positively obscene.

*Q.* The cinema appeals to larger audiences than theatres?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Don't you think that a stricter censorship is needed in this country than in England?

*A.* I don't think so. I believe the ordinary law provides means for excluding obscene shows.

*Q.* Some of them are not so obscene really, as you put it, but there are often times indelicate and indecent scenes.

*A.* I don't think we should tighten up censorship.

*Q.* I daresay you notice the nature of the advertisements which appear in Indian papers on certain medicines for sexual purposes. When our people see these pictures on the screen, don't you think they are likely to be more impressed with what they see there and try to do likewise?

*A.* I hardly find any English paper advertising such things. That is a very objectionable feature of our newspapers, it is very disgusting at times. The English press is remarkably free from that sort of thing. But if you go to France you will find the same thing in their newspapers, possibly worse.

*Q.* By seeing those advertisements one would rather be struck with the fact that there is a peculiar sexual instinct in our country?

*A.* I don't think that shows it. There is much greater reserve among the English people than amongst us. They won't talk about this matter so freely among themselves.

*Q.* Why should Indian papers advertise such medicines?

*A.* I think the motive behind it is profit.

*Colonel Crawford:* The ordinary paper won't touch them. I mean the ordinary newspaper press.

*A.* If I may interrupt, I don't quite see the connection between the two.

*Chairman:* The thing is that people who advertise like that think there is a class of people who will be induced to take such medicine. It shows the mentality which is likely to be affected by things seen on the screen.

*A.* I really still fail to see the connection. Because if you suggest, Sir, that the cinema itself excites passion or sex-feeling . . . . .

*Q.* I mean seeing two people doing the thing.

*A.* Well, then, they do not need the medicine.

*Col. Crawford:* You have got your point, I think.

*Chairman:* But has it got that effect?

*A.* I really don't think so; not on a normal man.

*Q.* Of course you are more familiar with the feelings of youth than I am.

*A.* Yes, exactly.

*Mr. Neogy:* I will trouble you only with one point, with regard to the model studio. Now, you have admitted in reply to No. 17 that it will take time for sufficient capital to be forthcoming for the film production industry, and the producers have stated that one way of attracting capital would be an assurance of Government orders. They say that if Government were to make a declaration of policy about the protection of this industry and furthermore if Government were to entrust their work to them, then that would enable them to attract capital more easily than at present. People would have greater confidence. Now, if Government were to establish a studio of their own, this particular form of help would not be available to the industry.

*A.* Well, isn't it a question almost universal, which is the same for all other things. Take railway workshops, you have got the same problem there. If you turn out things in the railway workshop you naturally take away work from private individuals.

*Q.* Well, the line has to be drawn somewhere because the Government do not manufacture every thing. Take text books, for instance. They depend upon private people for that. They just prescribe the syllabus and

they satisfy themselves as to whether a particular book complies with the syllabus.

A. Quite right.

Q. Now one thing more. Various provincial Governments have been doing something in this direction. Some of the Governments have produced propaganda films for their various departments, and the evidence has been almost unanimous to the effect that the work so turned out by these private producers has been quite satisfactory. And then again when you are thinking of this model studio, it has got to be remembered that a very large proportion of the pictures that have got to be taken for propaganda purposes and public health, industries and other matters, have to be taken in the open air, where the artificial lighting arrangements in the studio will not be of any help at all. They will have to go to a particular field if they have to reproduce a particular crop which they want to advertise. Similarly, they have to take a picture of a particular village if they want to have a proper local setting in publicity pictures.

A. I follow you.

Q. From that point of view a studio would not be of any very great assistance?

A. But I suppose what Mr. Chairman meant when he advocated, as I understood he did, a model studio is simply this, that it would afford facilities to private enterprise also. It would be an employing agency also. Apart from being a studio it would be a place where cameras would be available, and other conveniences.

Q. But so far as that is concerned, the present producers do not find it difficult to purchase cameras. They have quite a correct idea as to what a model studio should be. Their whole difficulty is one of finance. It is not as if they can't put up a studio because they haven't seen one. Many of them have gone abroad and seen first-class studios in America.

Chairman: "Many of them" that is rather excessive.

Mr. Neogy: In Bombay and Calcutta. We had 3 here and about 4 in Bombay and some in Lahore. It comes to about a dozen. They have gone abroad to learn; they have seen the studios. Their only difficulty is one of finance.

A. Yes, will you suggest that Government should finance them?

Q. That Government should give them orders and that will enable them to attract finance.

A. But the model studio will not obviate the necessity of Government employing other people to produce the films.

Q. They will be employed as salaried servants?

A. Not necessarily. On contract.

Q. Well, if Government studios are expected to turn out Government work, there will be very little left to distribute to the private producers.

Chairman: What Mr. Goswami means is you can give a private contract and give facilities in the studio for producing it. The studio may be availed of by the private contractor.

Mr. Neogy: Then who would employ the producers?

A. I said the Government.

Q. Then what function would the studio perform? The studio is Government; the officers are salaried servants of Government. Where does the producer come in?

A. The producer comes in when it is a case of producing a certain kind of film. Government think a certain kind of film should be shown for their educational propaganda. Well, they can't turn out all the films required in one or two model studios. They will have to go to the private producers.

Q. Your idea is that there should be a combination between the model studio and the private producer?

A. Combination, so as to reduce the model studio to really a model studio.

Q. The Indian Chamber of Commerce stated this morning that they were not in favour of a model studio and so far as there is any necessity for taking instruction in this line, they would rather like the Science Colleges and the Universities to impart that technical knowledge. You differ from their view on this point?

A. Yes.

Col. Crawford: I have only just a couple of questions, Mr. Goswami. I suppose you would not ban western films from India?

A. Not a bit of it.

Q. And you would take steps to prevent any country getting the monopoly of western films,—if you can find practical methods—keep the market open so that the films of all countries could compete?

A. Yes. With this reservation that preference for Indian films may have to be enforced.

Q. Yes, always granted it does not hit the Indian production. Would you say that producers of western films draw on the shady side of life a good deal in the production of their films?

A. I should not say that of the average.

Q. Well, when I say shady side I mean the gay life of the town.

A. Yes, it reflects the current mode of life to a large extent, doesn't it? The cinema like the theatre.

Q. But more essentially the gayer side of town life—one has to for dramatic purposes?

A. Yes.

Q. Is that not likely in any country to create a taste for gay life?

A. Possibly, for gay life.

Q. It is not essential, you think, to curtail that to some extent?

A. Well, that becomes a problem of social life. I should not entrust that task to a board of censors,—whether you want your life to be simpler or whether you want to have more gaiety in your social life is a matter not for cinema and theatre censors: it is a matter of public opinion.

Q. My feeling is that the film is a tremendous potential factor in social life, and my feeling also is that the producer of the west is not a man of very high culture. He has over-emphasised to my mind the gay side of life.

A. But would it be safe to generalise that producers are not men of culture?

Q. I am only taking my experience of what I have seen on the films.

A. I could not either accept or refute you—I don't know that they are all men who have any culture.

Mr. Green: Well, from internal evidence.

A. Crawford: I am judging from my experience of films.

A. I mean you have controversies on books, for instance—the most bitter controversies on books. Take that “La Garconne” by Victor Marguerite, two or three years ago. I was in Paris when the controversy was going on, and the newspapers were divided as pro-Marguerite and anti-Marguerite, and you had Anatole France saying that it was a credit to French literature and you had the Legion of Honour taking away his decoration from him. That is the feeling which many of us have that works of art should not be placed at the mercy of the censors.

Mr. Green: Who is to decide whether it is a work of art or pornography?

A. I think the public.

Col. Crawford: Well, that was my only point, whether you considered it created a taste for gay life.

A. To some extent, and to some extent it reflects current tendencies. It is the same thing in theatres.

Q. You don't think any action should be taken on that ground?

A. I don't think so.

Mr. Green: You say at the bottom of 29 that the committee have no special knowledge of the cinema industry. Have none of the members of the Chamber any association with the industry?

A. That I cannot say. But I don't think the committee know very much about the cinema industry.

Q. Then you cannot really give us much help on technical details such as "block" booking?

A. No.

Q. Then I won't trouble you.

### **Written Statement of the Indian Association, Calcutta, dated the 4th December 1927.**

1. We have no special knowledge of the cinematograph industry either in India or abroad.

2. (a) Our experience generally relates to Calcutta where—

(1) the cinemas are frequented to a large extent by the students and educated middle classes, with

(2) a sprinkling of illiterate people.

(b) Students, educated middle class people and soldiers mostly form a cinema audience.

(c) About 10 per cent. of the audience consists of children under 14 years of age.

3. Indian dramas, serials, detective stories and spectacular films are generally most popular with Indian audiences.

4. Our information is that exhibitors cater fairly adequately for Indian audiences.

5. Indian-produced films depicting Indian life are available to some extent and

(a) some of them are of good quality

(b) and are popular.

(c) But we have no information as to whether the exhibition of Indian films is more profitable or not than that of Western films.

6. It is likely that films of Indian life and scenes will be more popular with Indian audiences than the prevalent Western films.

7. We do not know whether there is any difficulty in exhibiting suitable films to the British and Indian troops.

8. We are not satisfied with the present condition of the Film Industry in India and we should like to see it improved.

9. We do not know whether good films are readily obtainable to exhibitors at reasonable prices. We are not aware of any monopoly in the supply or exhibition of films.

10 and 11. We have no information regarding these questions.

12. We believe that the Amusement Tax is a handicap to the exhibitor to a very small extent.

13. We do not know how the Customs Tariff on imported films affects the exhibitor.

14. We consider that an increased use of the cinema for educational purposes would help the growth of the film industry in India, and such films ought to be in demand.



15. We consider that India with her natural scenery and resources is favourably conditioned for the film producing industry.

16. There are some Indian producers and others of sufficient technical knowledge capable of producing good films.

17. With proper encouragement, sufficient capital may be forthcoming for film production.

21. We are opposed to the creation of a State agency to undertake the management of the Film Industry as a monopoly.

22. We consider that freedom should be allowed to the exhibitors to procure the best films at reasonable prices, irrespective of their place of origin.

23. Cinema pictures can only be used to a very small extent for making the various activities of the Governments and people of the British Commonwealth of Nations known to each other.

24. (a) It cannot be denied that some films have an injurious effect on public morals.

(b) But we believe that there is no general circulation of such films.

(c) Immoral and indecent films are harmful to every visitor of the cinema.

(d) Censorship regarding such films should be strictly enforced.

(e) We have no information as to whether there has been an increase of crime in Bengal due to the cinema.

25. Differences of social customs between the East and the West do necessitate special consideration in the censorship of films to a certain extent.

26. (a) More care should be taken in censoring films likely to offend religious susceptibilities.

(b) There have been a few instances in which religious susceptibilities have been offended.

27. (a) We do not think that any films exhibited in India have a tendency to misrepresent Western civilization or to lower it in the eyes of Indians. It is not a fact that films representing Western life are generally unintelligible to Indians.

(b) We have heard that some films exhibited abroad have a tendency to misrepresent Indian civilization but we have no specific instance.

29 and 30. We are in favour of special children's performances for children under 14 years of age.

31. We consider that censorship is an effective method of guarding against the misuse of films.

32. We consider that improvement is possible in the censorship of films.

34. (a) We do not approve of the replacement of the present Provincial Boards by a single Central Board as that would cause great inconvenience to the Trade.

(b) We do not advocate a Central Board in addition to the Provincial Boards and we are in favour of the continuance of the present arrangements.

35. (a) In the constitution of the Provincial Boards there should be more non-official members than at present and we suggest that the proportion should be at least two-thirds.

(b) We are opposed to the appointment of a whole-time well-paid Censor.

36. (a) and (b) We consider that one or more members of the Advisory Board should be associated with the Inspectors at Calcutta and Bombay for each inspection of films as the Inspectors cannot be expected to be capable of judging the suitability of all kinds of films and we have no doubt that gentlemen of suitable standing can be easily found for the purpose.

39. We do not know of instances in which pictures banned in the country of origin have been exhibited in this country.

40. We do not consider that posters and handbills of cinema performances should also be censored as we have not heard of any advertisements which were objectionable.

41. We have not noticed any perceptible improvement in the moral standard of the films exhibited in India.

42. (a) We do not consider that Government should exercise any control over film production.

(b) We do not consider that film-producing agencies should be registered or licensed or their studios periodically inspected.

**Oral Evidence of Mr. N. C. RAY, Secretary, Indian Association,  
Calcutta, on 21st December 1927.**

*Chairman:* You believe in the potentiality of Indian films?

A. Yes.

Q. And you think steps should be taken to encourage the growth of Indian films?

A. Yes.

Q. I don't know that you have made any definite suggestions as to what you think should be done to encourage films.

A. Well, no definite suggestion has been made. The quota system might be adopted.

Q. You approve of the quota system for Indian films, the percentage gradually rising?

A. Yes.

Q. What is your opinion as regards the existing tariff on films?

A. We have not much information but I think there is no differentiation now.

Q. I don't mean differentiation—whether it is sufficiently high or low.

A. Well, we cannot say. We have not considered that point.

Q. Now, of course, you are a responsible Indian body. What is your view on the question of the effect of the film on the Indian public. Do you think there is really any demoralising effect or any risk of it?

A. No, I don't think there is any risk.

Q. That is to say, the adolescents of the country go to the cinema. Do you think they are likely to be affected by what they see of the gay life of the west?

A. Well, they know much of it already. They have been seeing this for the last 20 or 30 years—at least 20.

Q. But I mean it cannot be the same people. It is the growing adolescent population. Take for instance the college youths, between the ages of 16 and 22. What do you think? Do you think they get affected by it? Some people think that they get affected.

A. Well, in this case there is some advantage inasmuch as these cinema shows divert their attention from other worse things.

Q. You mean they might be diverted to the streets and worse practices, in the absence of the cinema?

A. Yes.

Q. But on the whole are you satisfied that there is no risk of harm by allowing things to go on as they are?

A. Yes, that was the view of our committee.

Q. Do you think the censorship, as at present practised, is adequate?

A. We thought so. We have stated so.

Q. What do you say then in 26 (a)? "More care should be taken in regard to certain films likely to wound religious susceptibilities". But they are taking care. What have you in mind when you say "more care"?

A. Well, it does not mean anything particular about more care. What we meant was that more care should be taken for such films than for other films. Particular care.

Q. In 32, you say: "We consider that improvement is possible in the censorship of films".

A. Yes, we have made a suggestion to that effect under 36 (a) and (b) as regards the method of inspecting films.

Q. You consider that one or two members of the advisory board should be associated with the inspector for each film. Don't you think it will involve a lot of work by the members if each film has to be examined by members of the board?

A. I don't think it will mean much trouble for them.

Q. It means 3 hours work for two days in the week for each member, if there are 8 members.

A. I think there are people who would be willing to do it.

Mr. Green: Voluntarily? Without remuneration?

A. I think so.

Q. And regularly?

A. Well, I can't say if they will be regular.

Q. If they are not regular, how can you get your censorship done?

A. Well, there must be a panel.

Chairman: Do you believe that the work should be honorary or should it be paid for by fees? You see it is very troublesome work.

A. I am in favour of a small fee.

Q. A sitting fee?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you think men like you can be had for this purpose?

A. Oh, yes. There are many advisory committees here on which people serve.

Q. But still you know the difficulty of getting people to attend meetings of committees. You must have experienced how difficult it is to get an attendance at committee meetings.

A. I know.

Q. But if you attach a sitting fee to it you think it may be easier to get men?

A. Yes.

Q. You think a fee of Rs. 16 per diem will be ample?

A. I think so. In the general committee of the old Calcutta Corporation the fee was Rs. 16, so far as I remember.

Mr. Green: If you had a large panel from whom to choose members of the board to see actual films, would there not be risk of loss of uniformity?—of different standards arising?

A. No, I don't think so. What we had in view was that there are different kinds of films—educational films.

Q. Educational films are very few.

A. Yes, unfortunately. What we suggest is that they should come more into requisition now.

Q. There is not much difficulty about censoring those films.

A. Then there are the public health films.

Q. There is very little difficulty about those. But the vast quantity of entertainment films are the ones that require censorship. There are already differences of opinion naturally on the board. If you increase your panel

so as to enable gentlemen always to be available to examine films, won't you increase the number of differences of opinion?

A. No, I don't think we should increase the number of differences of opinion in that way. I can give you an instance here as regards the Calcutta Corporation. There are 90 members and every member is required to be associated with the chief executive officer or the deputy executive officer or some other officer in doing some sort of business in the ward to which the member belongs. They have got to do that and they do it willingly.

Q. Do I understand you wish to indicate that there is no difference of opinion in the Calcutta Corporation?

A. There may be differences of opinion but that would not count because you will have to go by the rule of the majority.

Q. Right. We will assume that two gentlemen differ among themselves, therefore it will have to go to the full board for consideration?

A. Yes.

Q. They differ among themselves.

A. Well, what is being done now?

Q. My point is, is there not less likelihood if a difference of opinion regarding standards of censorship, if the censoring body is a relatively small one?

A. How can that be? Supposing the matter goes up to the board of censors, then they will decide by a majority. There must be either a majority in favour or against it.

Q. I am not only arguing about majorities, but about the general way in which this board is going to work. You have got to get your gentlemen to come. If there is difference of opinion, then all the other members have got to see the film.

A. What we stated was that there should be an inspector and one member of the board inspecting a film. When they differ among themselves the matter is referred to the board.

Q. Yes, but my point is, it is surely easier to get a uniform and more or less agreed decision when the board consists of only 6 or 8 members. If you expand it to make it to 16 or 18, or 20 or 30, it will be obviously more difficult—at least in my view.

A. No, I don't think it will make it more difficult.

Q. The Chairman indicated to you that regularity of attendance would be a very important feature. The work of censorship goes on probably every day in the year. And you don't propose that the owner of a film should have to wait for the convenience of the member before it is censored? Censoring has to be done in a certain time. Do you think you will easily get gentlemen like yourself who will work in Calcutta right through the hot weather, the monsoon and the cold weather?

A. Supposing there are 20 members of the board and 20 sittings, well one member would be associated with the inspector every day. That would not require more than one day in the month from each member.

Q. Are you speaking with knowledge of the amount of work actually done? —the number of films examined?

A. But I understood from the Chairman that each man would have to do about 3 hours work for 2 days in the week, if two members do it; and if there are more members that will be divided again.

*Col. Crawford:* May I just pursue the question Mr. Green has put to you. Your board decides the general policy of censorship but when you come to interpret that policy in view of the actual film on the screen, people interpret it in different lights. You select your picture board and break them up into batches. (a) and (b) come along and interpret it in one way. Next day (c) and (d) come along and interpret it in another way. And so on. Therefore, aren't you really risking uniformity in censoring?

A. Why should it be necessary for different sets of people to inspect the same film?

Q. They would see different films, but your general standards of censorship are subject to interpretation by a large number of people.

A. But here you are employing only one man whose knowledge must be limited and who cannot be expected to interpret all films correctly.

Q. But he passes each film through the same test. If you think his taste is weak, you can turn him out and put in another man.

A. But here you are putting the whole burden of the work upon one man and upon the judgment of that man depends the success or otherwise of the film.

Q. Then you can tie him down. You can say: this man is not interpreting the correct policy of the board: we will get somebody else.

A. But when you are trying Indian films, he may not know Indian films at all.

Q. Are you satisfied with the stories shown on the films to-day in general?

A. Yes.

Q. You take your wife to see them and your daughters?

A. Well, unfortunately I am not married.

Q. No, but would you suggest that your women relatives should go to see them?

A. Yes, they are going. There is no objection. Once or twice I have noticed something objectionable but very rarely.

Mr. Neogy: You have been connected with one of the largest colleges in Bengal?

A. Yes.

Q. For how many years?

A. Over ten years.

Chairman: How long ago was it?

A. I joined the college in 1914. I am still connected with it.

Mr. Neogy: You have been a professor for all these years?

A. Yes, since 1897.

Q. And do you think the cinema has any evil influence upon the student community?

A. I have answered that.

### Written Statement of Mr. R. M. TAGORE, Calcutta.

2. (a) The habit of frequenting cinemas is almost universal among the educated classes. The same remark may be applied in the case of the illiterate classes, though the percentage among them is lower.

The attendance is visibly on the increase.

My observations apply generally to the conditions obtaining in Calcutta.

(b) Educated class form by far the majority in an average cinema audience. In Mechuabazar and Chitpore shows the illiterate classes preponderate.

(c) Children under 14 and adolescents form about a third of the audience.

3. Religious films and films depicting scenes of daring adventure appeal most to Indian audiences.

4. It cannot be said that Exhibitors are catering adequately for Indian audiences, most of the present films are of western life.

5. Quality not good.

(b) They are popular.

(c) It is difficult to say if the Indian films are profitable, but the Indian films draw crowded house.

6. (a) Yes.

(b) They would appeal to the educated and illiterate classes, though I think that for some time, western films with their greater perfection of finish would continue to have a very strong appeal, especially to the educated classes who appreciate western film-stars and the get up.

12. The amusement tax is a handicap no doubt. Without it, it will be more popular.

14. For educational purposes it will do some good no doubt and in agriculture and in public health, but not very much to the illiterate class.

15. There are no reasons why they should not be so. Surely, it would take some time to get talented men.

16. I think there are few only to take up that work.

17. Capital in this country is proverbially shy; but I think the hope of reasonable returns will draw capital.

18. Yes; if Government take the lead in broad casting films for educating people in agriculture, sanitation, etc., it would be a great incentive for the development of the industry.

21. I am not in favour of the state taking over the monopoly of the films industry. But high moral standard to be enforced before any film is allowed to be screened. But stereotyped insistence on such enforcement may lead to the crippling of cinematography as an art.

22. (a), (b) It would be most desirable. India should be a willing party to the adoption of such a measure, which will assist the development of her own film industry and help the diffusion of knowledge about the real India through the Empire.

(c) B. Empire films should be such as to show only the best side of western countries. So that India can learn something of the activities of the other Government of the B. Commonwealth. No good will be done to any by showing the worst side of any.

23. (a) To a great extent Cinema may well be utilised for the purpose.

24. (a) Many films are exhibited, which are of a particularly undesirable character.

(b) There is such a circulation but I cannot say it is general.

(c) Films depicting unrestrained passion and perverted sexual attraction are harmful, especially to the youthful part of the audience, producing as they do a very demoralising influence.

(d) (1) and (2) I wish the censorship were more rigid and strict.

(e) Possibly.

25. Certainly, yes.

27. (a) To some extent it is true Crime films and sex films lower the western civilization.

29. No.

30. No. Repression in whatever field, is never effective.

31. Yes.

32. I should like a tightening up of the censorship as it works at present.

33. (a), (b), (c) Certainly not. "Strict" does not necessarily mean "puritanic." Unchartered freedom—even in the artistic field—cannot but produce deleterious effects.

34. (a), (b) No.

35. (a) More non-officials on the Board who are really fitted for the task would mean better results.

(b) The suggestion is very pertinent and I, for one, favour its adoption.

36. (b) Periodical examination of films by members of the Board cannot deter men of standing from and consenting to act as such.

40. Yes, some of the posters do not exhibit good taste.

**\*Oral Evidence of Mr. R. M. TAGORE, Calcutta, on Wednesday, the  
21st December 1927.**

*Chairman :* You come from a family of artists?

*A.* Yes, but I am not an artist myself.

*Q.* I am rather interested in your statement that you don't want unchartered freedom even in the artistic field?

*A.* Have I said that?

*Q.* Under 33?

*A.* Strict does not necessarily mean . . .

*Q.* I know. I have specially taken it with your answer to 24. You seem to think that there are many films of a particularly undesirable character?

*A.* Certainly. And there is a big circulation, though I cannot say it is general. Films depicting unrestricted passion and perverted sexual passion are harmful. I wish the censorship were more rigid and strict.

*Q.* So you think that films as shown now some of which are objectionable?

*A.* Some of them are certainly objectionable, particularly the sex type of films.

*Q.* Do you go to the cinema very often?

*A.* Not very often, but fairly often.

*Q.* And you come across people who go to the cinema?

*A.* Yes, a lot of people.

*Q.* I suppose you belong to the advanced section among the Bengalees?

*A.* Yes, but in spite of that, our standard of morality is different. I think you should not show such pictures before illiterate audiences.

*Q.* And youths as well?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* But the illiterate people very seldom go to social dramas where these scenes appear?

*A.* In the lower class seats there are always plenty of illiterate people.

*Q.* It does not follow that they are all illiterate people. Many students go and take 4 annas seat?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* I am afraid that too much is made of the illiterate man. He does not get the benefit nor evil of it?

*A.* It is a matter of opinion.

*Q.* Can you call to your mind any particular films, of the number of films that you have seen during the last two months, and say that it is objectionable?

*A.* I cannot name any for the moment.

*Q.* You cannot name any particular passionate love making films which you consider as distinctly objectionable?

*A.* I could not tell you. But I have seen many and some of them are sickening.

*Q.* Among the so many that you have seen, can you not pick out the most prominent of them which you consider as distinctly objectionable or sickening?

*A.* Most of the sex films are so.

*Q.* If you find them sickening, how is it you go?

*A.* Sickening in this sense that one feels awkward in company with family and children. Some of the pictures may not be sickening to my mind, but they are sickening to children.

*Q.* I really want to know what you mean by sickening?

*A.* It is a question of delicacy.

**Q.** I suppose you can judge the thing before you go. Who feels delicacy?

**A.** It is difficult to judge the films from the names.

**Q.** Have you come across any instances where a cinema goer has become a bad man by going to the cinema?

**A.** I could not say that.

**Q.** I don't see why you apprehend any trouble from the cinemas. Don't think I am cross examining you, but I really want to know your view?

**A.** That is my feeling.

**Q.** It is not based upon any experience?

**A.** No, it is based upon my observation.

**Q.** Yet you tell us that you did not find it sickening yourself, but it may be sickening to others?

**A.** We can all understand the significance of those kisses and love making scenes, but others may not, especially children. We understand the social habits and customs of the westerners, but the illiterate people and the children don't, and it may be an encouragement to them to imitate the westerners.

**Q.** Is the cinema likely to be harmful to the youth of the country?

**A.** Yes, I think so, but I cannot say that this is based upon my actual experience.

**Q.** It is only your fear that such a thing might happen?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Is the thing so general as to make such a deep impression on your mind?

**A.** Almost all the sex and cinema films are like that.

**Q.** You would object, then, to any films?

**A.** Most of those films are like that.

**Q.** Even in Bengal and Calcutta?

**A.** Yes, most of those films I see are objectionable from my point of view, especially the sex films.

**Q.** Most of the social drama films, according to you, are objectionable?

**A.** It may be rather an exaggeration, but many of the sex and crime films are objectionable.

**Q.** So you would cut them out?

**A.** I don't want to cut them out altogether, but in censoring the films regard must be had to the feelings of Indians.

**Q.** Have the Indian parents to your knowledge shown by any behaviour that they did not approve of any films?

**A.** I have seen people specially students loudly cheering on seeing some of those sex films which was strongly criticized and commented upon by the elderly people.

**Q.** Have you elderly people, who visited the cinema at any time exhibited your disapproval of such scenes?

**A.** We can't exhibit our disapproval when sitting in the theatre, that is not a proper thing to do.

**Q.** For instance, we saw a scene the other day in one of the theatres in Calcutta and it was so sickening that the audience rose *en masse*, because they saw cruelty practised on the stage?

**A.** The films that I speak of do not go so far as that. I have never seen such instances in Calcutta.

**Mr. Green :** I just want to know what is exactly in your mind when you say that you want stricter censorship in respect of scenes of passion. I take it that you are not considering me and my friends, I take it you are not considering the feelings of the European community, but you think that such things are likely to produce an evil effect on the minds of your own young men and young women, is that so?



A. Quite right.

Q. Do you mean it is going to drive them actually to sexual extravagance? Do you seriously fear that?

A. It may.

Q. I am asking you this question on account of the divergent evidence on the point. Do you think it is also going to induce them to adopt, apart from questions of morality, the western habits and customs, and a civilization that is foreign to your people and possibly distasteful to you and to many others?

A. They may not copy the customs of the western race all at once. But those sex films will lower the westerners in their eyes.

Q. I only want to find out whether you think it is definitely harming your young men?

A. It may encourage them to adopt vicious ways by copying western standards and customs before their minds are developed by education.

Q. I think you are a little frightened, because, as one witness told us, these films are acting like a slow poison?

A. I would not go so far as that.

Q. Then it comes to this, that you do not like seeing them, because you are frightened of its effect on your young men?

A. Yes. I would add a few words. In my view the production of crime and sex films should be carefully censored, otherwise you may drive thousands of illiterate and half-educated men and women to godless western methods of daring and adventurous activities and to sexual pleasures whose minds have not been fully developed on western lines to receive those films in the right spirit. In one word, the western coat in this case will not fit the eastern people till you widely disseminate western education and ideals and shape the eastern mind and spirit according to western mould. Without proper education the real spirit is liable to be missed and a false and misleading impression is apt to be carried away. This is a danger, which ought not to be minimized.

**\*Oral Evidence of Mr. H. C. MUKHARJEE, Amalgamated Newspapers, Ltd., on Wednesday, the 21st December 1927.**

*Chairman :* May I know what your experience of the cinema is?

A. I have spent many years of my life as an educationist and as a journalist. I was connected with the "Bengalee" for a long time. I am still a professor of law in the Ripon college. I have bestowed some attention upon this subject, and I think, Sir, that though the cinema has been in our midst for the last thirty years or more, and although people in Calcutta have taken to it with great enthusiasm, still there is much room for improvement considering the vast potentialities of the cinema in various directions. Large numbers of people, both educated and uneducated, patronise the cinema shows. So far as Indian audiences are concerned, some of them like very much some of the excellent films that come from the west which give information on various aspects of western social life, instructional films and others which are all very much appreciated by the Indians. But I think special steps might be taken to encourage producers to make films depicting Indian history and Indian chivalry. Therefore, in my opinion, the cinema ought to be conducted here with due regard to the feelings, sentiments and susceptibilities of Indians.

Now, so far as the industry itself is concerned, I think the Government can do a great deal for placing it on a satisfactory footing. The cinema industry may still be called a nascent industry, and some of us still remember John Stuart Mill's dictum that a nascent industry ought to receive subvention from the Government. My idea is that Government ought to guarantee interest so long as a cinema company does not become a paying proposition in order that the shareholders may have some confidence.

*Mr. Green :* You mean that for every company Government should guarantee some interest?

A. If possible for all, of course with due regard to efficiency.

*Chairman :* If they want financial aid, Government should give it? Government should exercise some control over the accounts?

A. That ought to be done, so that money may not be wasted.

*Mr. Neogy :* That will be confined to the production side?

A. Yes. I want Government to grant scholarships to promising students to go abroad and receive the necessary training in the line. They will come back fully equipped with knowledge and thereby they may give a stimulus to the industry.

Q. Do you want Government to guarantee them employments also?

A. To some extent if possible. But I think they will themselves find suitable openings.

Q. How many scholarships do you want Government to give?

A. At least half a dozen scholarships, that is to say, one for each province. Such scholarships ought to be given, because we cannot expect our science colleges to help our students in this matter in the near future. Therefore, it is incumbent upon Government to do the needful until suitable provision is made in our science colleges here to teach our students the several branches of the cinema industry.

Now, Indian films are very much appreciated by Indian audiences. "Durgesh Nandini" or "Krishna Kanta's Will" or mythological films like "Savitri" or "Lanka Dahan" are all appreciated by our people.

*Chairman :* Are they not a paying concern?

A. I think they are paying.

*Mr. Green :* Do I understand you to say "Durgesh Nandini" only appeals to illiterate audiences?

A. It appeals both to literate and illiterate audiences. Considering the fact that Indian films as a rule are somewhat inferior to the western films, it is really gratifying to see that they are so much patronised by Indian audiences, and if some of the defects appearing in Indian films are set right, I think there is a bright future before the industry.

*Chairman :* If you say that the Indian films are paying, why should they need any aid from Government?

A. In the initial stages I think Government ought to help all nascent industries,—as a matter of fact it must be their duty to encourage and develop small industries so that they may stand on their own legs.

Q. If the Indian films are popular, it shows that they are standing on their own legs. Why don't people go on producing more films?

A. There is still some hesitation in the public mind.

Q. Do you think that some Government action will increase the growth of the indigenous industry?

A. Yes.

Q. What about the effect of the cinema on the student population?

A. I don't think the cinema has a deleterious effect on the student mind.

Q. Do you agree with the statement made by the last witness whom you were hearing?

A. No. But sex and crime films ought to be avoided as far as possible.

Q. You want stricter censorship?

A. I don't believe in copy book maxims, but some sort of stricter supervision should be exercised, not upon the students, but on the films.

Q. Do you think that some of the films which are shown now need not be shown?

A. Yes, films depicting the night life of London should not be shown. I don't want the veil to be lifted. All these things should be avoided for the benefit of the youth of this country.

Q. Then you want stricter censorship?

A. To some extent. I want the Board of Censors to be amenable to popular control; it should not be purely an official body as it is now. Now I find the Commissioner of Police is the Chairman. That is an incongruity. The Board should be completely amenable to popular control, and there must be a non-official chairman with an elected Indian majority on it.

Q. What do you mean by "amenable to popular control"?

A. I want some members to be elected in the same way as members are elected to the Calcutta Corporation. We send out, I mean the Calcutta Corporation sends out, one of its representatives and he sits on the Board of Censors. Similarly, I think the University may be called upon to send one of its representatives to sit on the Board.

Q. Have you got a Teachers' Association?

A. Yes. I think a teacher as well as a journalist, who are all guardians of public morals, ought also to be put on the Board.

Q. Do you think journalists are performing their duties all right in the matter of films?

A. I would rather not answer it.

Q. I would like to have an answer from you as a journalist?

A. I could not say that they are doing their duty.

Q. Do you think there is sufficient criticism of the film in the press?

A. There ought to be some more criticism. As regards the amusement tax, I want it to be removed, because the people of this country, especially the poorest section, have no diversions in life.

Q. No amusement tax is levied on lower class seats.

A. Quite true, but those who are salaried people and the middle classes also suffer by that tax. There are so many clerks and mercantile assistants who visit the cinemas and they are all affected by the amusement tax.

Q. They don't go in for one rupee seats?

A. Considering the passion for cinema, many of them on occasions go to the cinema and take one rupee seats.

Q. Would you remove the amusement tax on all tickets or only up to one rupee seats?

A. I would abolish that tax altogether. Let the Government levy a heavier tax on betting on races and not on these small amusements, because the life of these poor and middle class people is a long chapter of suffering and misery, and they must have more diversions and pastimes.

Q. I suppose you think there should be stricter censorship in regard to films?

A. But the Board should be thoroughly representative, and there should be an elected non-official majority of Indians on it. I am against a Central Board of Censors, and I am in favour of Local Boards. We do not want centralisation in these days. These are days of decentralisation.

Q. Now, do you find any deleterious effect on the youth of this country on account of the cinema?

A. I don't want crime films and passionate love-making scenes to be shown because such things make them light hearted.

Mr. Green : Do you mean in a good sense?

A. I mean in a bad sense.

Chairman : Do you believe it is a phenomenon which is developing?

A. It bids fair to develop, and I don't think these sensational, thrilling scenes should be exhibited for a long time, because they will have a bad effect on little boys.

**Q.** What is the objection to youths seeing them?

**A.** I think they will make them nervous. By seeing these thrilling scenes constantly, it will have a bad effect on the nerves.

**Q.** Or will it put more nerve in them?

**A.** Constant thrills have an injurious effect upon the human mind, speaking psychologically. You see a harassing thing and it tells upon your brain and makes undue demands on the mind. That will apply to all people, young and old, but more to the young than to the old.

**Q.** But the old can take care of themselves, is that not so?

**A.** Yes. As regards Imperial Preference, I desire to make one remark. I don't think the Indians are concerned in it, because the Empire is still an abstraction. Therefore, we have yet to make sure that Indian films are properly regarded in other parts of the empire.

**Q.** You won't advocate a *quid pro quo*?

**A.** No.

**Mr. Green:** You do believe, I take it, that the cinema has a broadening educative effect?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** You also want the industry to be kept on right lines?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** You have heard my questions to the last witness. I am not concerned with European prestige or anything of that sort. I am anxious to know whether any fears are entertained that the films as exhibited now will make the Indian youth adopt some of the less reputable sides of English life?

**A.** Some of the films give a misleading impression.

**Q.** Are they not likely to do harm to your young men?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Therefore, you want stricter censorship?

**A.** Yes, I want more films to be used for imparting instruction. Every school and college ought to have a cinema.

**Q.** Now, I want to know whether you think that we should recommend, from the point of view of harm done to young Indians of both sexes, stricter censorship?

**A.** Yes, in order to safeguard against future mistakes.

**Q.** You are not frightened about its general effect, that the exhibition of scenes of different countries and the different habits of the people will make your young men adopt them?

**A.** No.

### **Written Statement of Rao Sahib C. S. R. RAO, Sub-Editor, "The Statesman."**

America and Europe are now in a state of war—in the film world—and I do not think that India should allow herself to be drawn into the conflict unless self-interest dictated to her that such a course was prudent. I shall, as briefly as possible, refer to the causes underlying the great fight that is going on for the screens of the world.

Every important film-producing country—U. S. A., England, France, and Germany—has come to realise that the moving picture is more than a mere amusement to millions of people, that it is a powerful instrument for propagandist work and an adjunct to the exploitation of foreign markets. Here is a candid official admission: "American films abroad create a demand for American clothes and other American products, and have been an important aid to the American manufacturers doing business in foreign markets." If America is now the "mistress of the world's screens" it is due to the fact

that American producers have the backing of Wall Street bankers. It is this factor, more than anything else, that has enabled America to produce "Bigger and Better Pictures" and obtain a strong hold in foreign markets.

America has realised that no picture shown only in the States can be a financial success. Nearly a third of the gross income of her producing companies comes from abroad. And she is always on the look-out for fresh fields. American companies advance money to producers in foreign countries, draw away their "stars" by the offer of attractive salaries and, in some cases, build and buy picture theatres and obtain complete controlling interests. It is not to be wondered at that American pictures constitute some 90 per cent. of the world's film fare.

#### BRITISH FILMS.

The Great War had temporarily suspended the film industry of Europe. America took advantage of the financial stringency in European countries and, backed by her bankers, she has developed it to such an extent that the "moving picture ranks second to steel as the world's best selling commodity."

Europe is now attempting to fight this "American menace." Germany is once again on her feet and her ambition is to conquer and hold the European market against America. At present the German producers can only supply some 50 per cent. of the home demand. The French studios are said to be working overtime, and as finance is easily available France will soon rehabilitate herself. What about England? In 1925, 34 films were complete in British studios and in 1926 the number was 23. The output this year is estimated at about 75.

There has also been a movement to draw the principal European Companies into closer touch with each other.

The question which India is asked to decide is whether she will participate in the policy outlined in the resolution of the Imperial Conference to give some measure of encouragement to British Empire films, and if so would such participation assist the development of her own film industry. I frankly confess that India stands to gain nothing by such participation. No matter what the country of origin of a film may be India wants the best. And my own feeling is that the trade should be left to itself to import what films it wants. This is a matter in which sentiment should be entirely put aside.

At the same time I would suggest that there should be some reciprocity arrangement between English and Indian producers—this to make India better known in England and *vice versa*.

#### TRADE AND TARIFFS.

The Indian trade returns give the imports of Cinematograph films into this country in linear feet. Such imports were first recorded separately in 1922-23. The figures for the last three years are given below. It should be remembered that the countries whence goods are consigned are not necessarily the countries of *actual origin* of the goods:

	Length in feet.		
	1924-25.	1925-26.	1926-27.
From U. S. A. . . .	3,728,043	4,831,188	6,513,659
From U. K. . . . .	3,410,851	5,591,048	4,812,530
From Germany . . .	1,440,238	1,782,491	3,317,126
Total (all countries) .	9,444,760	13,917,199	17,482,664
Share of Bengal . . .	2,485,852	4,651,468	5,004,294
Share of Bombay . . .	5,791,319	8,343,550	11,237,434

Prior to December 27, 1924, Cinematograph films were imported free. On that date an *ad valorem* duty of 5 per cent. was imposed. The duty was raised to 7½ per cent. in March 1926 and to 20 per cent. in March 1921. In March 1922 it was reduced to 15 per cent., which is the rate prevailing to-day.

To promote the indigenous industry I would advocate a reduction in the duty on Cinema apparatus and accessories.

I would also suggest the abolition of the Amusement Tax on cinemas—this to enable theatre proprietors to provide better and more commodious seating accommodation. Students form a large part of a cinema audience and it is appalling to find that in Bengal one in every three students has a defective vision. I would suggest to proprietors of cinemas the advisability of admitting *bonâ fide* students to a "higher class" at half the usual rates.

#### STATE AGENCY.

I am opposed to the idea of creating a State agency to undertake the management of the film industry as a monopoly. The government should leave private business alone.

The example of Japan should be an object lesson. Her progress in the cinema industry has been phenomenal. Five years ago she imported 90 per cent. of her wants; to-day she imports not more than 50 per cent. of her requirements. In spite of the paternal form of Government the State has left the industry to work out its own salvation. All that the State has done, according to the latest official Year-Book, is "to establish a committee of educational authorities to select pictures to be recommended for the purpose of public edification." Something like that may be done here. The departments of education, agriculture, and public health may conjointly select suitable films for exhibition.

The enterprise of some Indian railways in instituting travelling cinemas is commendable. The films depict Indian farm life and are greatly appreciated by the cultivators.

The Indian industry is showing a healthy sign of activity. One enterprising firm is contemplating to build an up-to-date studio costing over a lakh-and-a-half for Indian films and I am sure others will follow in its wake.

The standard of Indian films, compared with the imported ones, is poor and the real difficulty is to find trained artists. It will not do to depend on old and worn-out artists of the Bengali stage. One must go outside Bengal and Bombay for artists with the "Cinema face." I think there is good material in Kathiawar, the Punjab, and Kashmir.

#### CENSORSHIP BOARDS.

I do not think that the present system of censorship in Bengal is altogether satisfactory. There are grave defects in the constitution of the Board, in that there is not a single representative of the Press on it.

The abolition of the Provincial Boards and their replacement by a single Central Board, apart from the inconvenience caused to the trade, is likely to lead to complications, because of differences of local conditions. There have been instances of foreign and Indian films considered as unobjectionable in one Indian province being totally rejected by another. The "Triumph of the Rat," "Moon of Israel" and the "Life of Buddha" are three recent instances. Even in Europe the regulations and restrictions imposed by the censors vary a good deal according to local standards.

I remember a few years ago—that was before the establishment of Censorship Boards—there was quite a furor over the exhibition of a film at Karachi depicting a scene in the life of a Moslem prophet. It had a sequel in court. The theatre manager was sued by the local Mohammedans for alleged insult to their prophet and their religion. The court dismissed the suit, as no proof existed that the manager intended to insult any one.

#### WHOLE-TIME SECRETARY.

I quote this as an illustration of the peculiar difficulties of censorship in India. A recent English publication on the cinema trade is responsible for the statement that "in India, anything which might show the superiority of a black over a white is not allowed." What exactly is meant is not quite

clear. Does it mean, for instance, that the picture of a boxing match in which an Indian knocked out an Englishman is tabooed? I do not believe that any racial question comes in at all. The proper function of a Board of Censors is to stand between the producer and the public and safeguard the interests of both. And I can conceive of no one better qualified to safeguard the interests of the public than a representative of the Press.

The Bengal Board should be strengthened by the addition of a representative of the European Association a representative of the Trades' Association, two representatives of the film trade, two lady members (one Indian and another European), and two representatives of the Press.

The inspectors subordinate to the Board have neither the training nor the qualifications requisite for the work entrusted to them. I suggest that all films should be examined by the members of the Board. This will ensure the maintenance of a good standard of films. A film costing several lakhs to produce should not be left to the mercy of an ill-qualified and ill-paid inspector. I would also suggest the appointment of a whole-time secretary to the Board.

**\*Oral Evidence of Rao Sahab C. S. R. RAO, Sub-Editor, "The Statesman," on Thursday, the 22nd December 1927.**

*Chairman :* You are Assistant Editor in the "Statesman"?

A. I am a sub-editor.

Q. And the views which you give us are your individual views and have nothing to do with the views of the "Statesman"?

A. Yes.

Q. I wish to make it clear so that we may have the benefit of your views. What were you before?

A. I was attached to the Commercial Intelligence Department of the Government of India for over a dozen years, first as assistant editor of the "Indian Trade Journal" and then I was at Pusa at the Agricultural Institute. I was also Assistant Editor of the Agricultural Journal of India. In 1910 I was taken on the staff of the Commercial Intelligence office and I was Superintendent of the Department for about 10 years, and at the time of my premature retirement in 1923 I was Foreign Trade Intelligence Officer. There are two Intelligence officers, one is Local Trade Intelligence officer and the other is Foreign Trade Intelligence officer. The post came under the lynchaxe and I had to go.

Q. I take it you frequent the cinema as often as you can?

A. Yes, I do.

Q. I understand you also now and then write articles and notes on cinema?

A. Occasionally.

Q. You have been closely following it?

A. Both in the course of my official service and as a journalist I have had opportunities of studying the position of the trade abroad and in India.

Q. Your native place is Mysore?

A. Yes.

Q. And you know Calcutta fairly well?

A. I have been here for 19 years at a stretch.

Q. You frequent all the cinemas here, both at the west-end and in the east-end?

A. Yes.

Q. On reading your statement I find generally that you are satisfied with the tone of the films which are shown?

A. Generally I am.

*Q.* And I suppose you recognise that the cinema both on the exhibition side and on the production side is more or less in an infant state in this country?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Do you think there is plenty of scope for extending cinema theatres?

*A.* Yes, I think so.

*Q.* You think this is a powerful instrument for doing good to the country and spreading knowledge to the people?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* You do not believe it is all evil and no good at all?

*A.* I think it is just the reverse.

*Q.* You believe that Government should do more to produce public utility propaganda films?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Do you think more money should be spent?

*A.* I do not think it will be necessary to spend much money.

*Q.* In production it will be?

*A.* They could easily get any company, and trade or any cinema proprietor to produce films,—for instance, if the Agricultural Institute at Pusa wanted to show something agricultural . . .

*Q.* Still they won't be exhibited by the ordinary exhibitor. It would not attract a house?

*A.* No.

*Q.* So that the cost of production must be borne by Government?

*A.* A portion of it can come into the topical budget for instance.

*Mr. Green :* Will the entertainment houses pay for it?

*A.* Topical budget stands on a different footing.

*Chairman :* Just as horse races and so on. You have that in mind?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* But ordinary educational films of the kind you have in mind—knowledge of machinery, knowledge of methods of cultivation and so on—do you think . . .

*A.* I have seen one where the Anglo-Swiss Company show their methods of pure milk production compared with the methods prevailing in India, and they have an educative effect.

*Q.* But do you think you can rely on the trade for exhibiting them?

*A.* Some facilities will have to be given by Government in the shape of small money grants.

*Q.* What do you think of the idea of Government starting a model studio in the first instance to manufacture these public utility films and gradually . . .

*A.* I am opposed to it on two grounds, firstly on the plea that Government entering a trade has always been a failure?

*Q.* You do not call this film manufacture, trade?

*A.* And secondly finance will not be so easily forthcoming.

*Q.* Don't you think it will be an advantage if all the provinces can pool their resources together for producing such films?

*A.* If they find that the trade is not sufficiently enterprising to take up the idea.

*Q.* The trade have not done anything hitherto to produce such films?

*A.* No.

*Q.* So you cannot depend upon them to produce such films unless Government takes the initiative?

*A.* Yes.



**Q.** The question is in what form that initiative should be taken?

**A.** My own view is not in the form of Government establishing a studio.

**Q.** Don't you think that a model studio will be a means of inducing the industry to show a little more enthusiasm and adopt a better method of production in the country?

**A.** I do not think so.

**Q.** So you are rather in favour of Government using private agencies for producing what they want?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Do you think that the State should provide scholarships for getting technical training to people who want to embark on it?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Just as photography, direction and such other things are needed?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Or would you advocate sending for experts on short term contracts for that purpose?

**A.** I am for the grant of scholarships for certain students to go abroad, just as they do in the case of dyeing, printing, and so on.

**Q.** You must have heard of the trade difficulties and trade jealousies abroad where you see our students do not get opportunity to learn things. They are kept back. Every country wants to guard its own interests and the students who are sent abroad, we are told by some people, do not get sufficient opportunities for learning the tricks of the trade or the finish?

**A.** It is a matter for the Government to take up either with the High Commissioner or the Trade Commission in London.

**Q.** By negotiation? Do you think that negotiation between Governments is sure to help you in the matter?

**A.** I should think so, because we are not competing with British films directly.

**Q.** The best expert aid can be had either in Germany or America in this matter, and not yet in England. They too have to depend upon America or Germany. Which would you prefer,—sending for an expert on short term contracts for each of these branches and making him give training here to our Indian students?

**A.** I do not advocate the idea of sending for any experts at this stage.

**Q.** I dare say you have seen the comments of the Lytton Committee's report?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** They have dealt with this aspect of the question and they say that there are difficulties thrown in the way of Indian students getting knowledge, especially in the workshops and other places?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** In spite of that, you would advocate that that is the better course?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** As regards the production and exhibition of films in this country, would you leave it as a free trade open to any one, or would you confine it to any particular agencies?

**A.** I would make a proviso that no foreign company should be allowed to establish theatres and studios here and oust the struggling Indian industry.

**Q.** You want to confine the thing to what you would call Indian concerns?

**A.** Indian capital. They should be registered.

**Q.** Both production and exhibition should come on a register?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Complying with certain conditions that may be prescribed by the Legislature to see that it is Indian in its main aspect?

A. Yes. I would even go further and suggest that foreign companies, including British companies, should not be allowed to come in and take pictures in India for exhibition in their own country.

Q. Now they do it and take away the negatives which become the property of foreign nations. By spending very little they become owners?

A. And apart from that there is a possibility of their misrepresenting Indian conditions.

Q. In that way registration for that purpose would be necessary?

A. Yes.

Q. No one, who is not on the register, should be allowed either to produce or exhibit,—is that your point?

A. Yes.

Q. And you want to safeguard also that it is mainly Indian?

A. Yes.

Q. Your advice to the Committee, I see you have written a long minute on the subject, is that we should not get ourselves involved in any competition between Britain and America in this matter?

A. I hold strong views on that point.

Q. You think India wants the best from any country?

A. Yes.

Q. And all that you are anxious about is that the censorship should be impartial between country and country. Are you for strict censorship in this country?

A. Yes. My own view of the matter is this. The ordinary man who goes to the cinema theatre wants to get amused and it is immaterial to him what picture is shown so long as it amuses him. No Englishman would refrain from going to an Italian Opera Company because it is Italian, because he wants to amuse himself. I would not taboo a foreign film because it is foreign.

Q. No. The only suggestion is when a particular country has got hold of the cinema in another country, it gives that first country facilities for advertising its goods, its manners, its methods and its modes?

A. Yes.

Q. I suppose you want India to have her own films?

A. Yes.

Q. And everything should be done to encourage the growth of Indian films?

A. Yes.

Q. And you will advocate any embargo on non-Indian films which will secure that object?

A. Yes.

Q. But you would not discriminate between non-Indian ones?

A. No.

Q. You refer to Japan. It is a very marked fact that within five years they have been able to stop this importation of films to the extent of 40 per cent. of their usual imports?

A. My statement is taken from the official records.

Q. I suppose you are familiar with what the Japanese Government are doing there in that respect?

A. I do not think they are in any way helping the industry by State monopoly or by a State studio.

Q. We have called for information on the point?

A. The information is available in the Commercial Intelligence Department next door. It is in the Year-Book.

Q. That we have got, but we have written to the Japanese Consul to give us that information and he has written to his Government for it. I find from

the figures you give for imports in this country that India is probably using more British films than Britain herself?

A. The figures are misleading as they stand. It is not the country of origin but the country of shipment that is shown in the statistics.

Q. Why do you advocate the abolition of the amusement tax? It seems to me such a trifle?

A. It is a trifle and it is just because it is a trifle that Government should not insist on this trifle. It does not add much to the revenues of Government.

Q. Do you think its abolishment would cause the opening of new cinemas?

A. In a way it will. My point is accommodation in the cinemas is not adequate. As a matter of fact, I have visited the cinemas fairly frequently and found most of the boxes empty; it is the lower classes that are always full and there is not sufficient accommodation for these people.

Q. The boxes are empty because the class of people who patronise them are so small. You are aware that the amusement tax is not in vogue except in Bengal and Bombay?

A. Yes.

Q. I do not think it is in force in any other province. I think there was an attempt to introduce it in Madras but I do not know its result?

A. I do not think there is any such tax there.

Q. I do not know if it is prevalent in the mofussil?

A. It is not.

Q. Then how is it a handicap to the opening of new theatres? It is prevalent only in the Presidency towns?

A. Yes.

Mr. Green : We were further told that the film theatres in Bombay and Calcutta are the ones which produce the revenue.

Chairman : Don't you think that if such a tax is levied it could be utilised for giving those scholarships and other things?

A. Government surely gets its revenue from censorship.

Q. That is only to pay for the cost of censorship. It is hardly paying?

A. And of course there is tariff on these things.

Q. You cannot separate tariff on one particular commodity and ear-mark it for a particular purpose?

A. Of course not

Q. Don't you think that the tax could be better used, for instance, by appropriating it for scholarships such as you advocate?

A. It might. I have not had opportunities of looking into the accounts of several companies. There is only one company, namely, Madans, which publishes its accounts in the Stock Exchange Gazette and I do not think that, in spite of the fact that they are spending a lot of money, they are making a good profit. Even the stage is struggling in Bengal and I do not think the amusement tax is of any help to Government in yielding any large revenue, but its removal is likely to help the trade.

Q. You say that students should be admitted at half rates. On the other hand the complaint has been made by several people that students take bad impressions by going to the cinema?

A. I really do not think they do.

Q. On the other hand you think they benefit by going there?

A. Yes. I was reading the Students' Health Report the other day, from which I see that most of the students have defective vision. I think it could be attributed to frequenting cinema theatres, because probably most of them go to the 2 or 4 annas seats and sit in front and their vision is affected.

*Q.* It all depends upon what view you take of the effect of the cinema. If they go there merely to satisfy their vicious tastes. . .

*A.* I do not think so. In the first place they cannot afford it.

*Q.* They are living away from their parents?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Many of them can if they like to?

*A.* They are old enough to realise.

*Q.* Any way you do not think the danger is so great?

*A.* No.

*Q.* On the other hand the advantages are so great, in your opinion, that you would advocate the reduction of rates in order to encourage students going?

*A.* I would.

*Q.* You want to encourage students going to the cinemas?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* What is your idea about censorship boards? Of course you know the constitution in Calcutta?

*A.* Yes. I would like to see it strengthened by two lady members.

*Mr. Green :* There is one lady member already who belongs to the Vigilance Association?

*A.* I would like to see one more.

*Chairman :* You want an Indian lady and the Indian element to be increased?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* There is a great point in what you have suggested that experienced journalists may be on the Board?

*A.* I think they know what the public wants, they are in touch with them.

*Q.* The only difficulty is this. Advertisement is such a paying proposition to the journals that already there is complaint that they do not sufficiently criticise the films because of the fear that they would lose their business?

*A.* I really do not think so; no responsible paper . . . .

*Mr. Green :* But are all papers responsible?

*Chairman :* The complaint is about responsible papers. What you would call responsible papers—they get so much from the advertisement revenue that they are afraid to criticise the film in the way one would expect them to?

*A.* I quite realise that.

*Q.* That is the only danger I fear, otherwise, with his experience as a journalist, with his critical faculties developed, he would be a valuable acquisition to the Board?

*A.* I do think the journalist would be a valuable acquisition to the Board.

*Q.* Would you suggest that the Journalists' Association should send a representative or something of that sort?

*A.* Unfortunately the Journalists' Association here is not sufficiently representative.

*Q.* I really wonder why the Chambers of Commerce, or the Trades Associations, as such, should be called upon to send members to the Board. The censorship is merely concerned with safeguarding public morals?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* And probably, public peace?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* In a secondary sense public peace and in a primary sense public morals?

A. Yes.

Q. If you introduce an element of trade jealousy and other things in the Censorship Board, don't you think you are giving room for partiality? For instance, the man interested in British trade might say, "Very well, I will be lenient to British films." If you introduce that, is there not that danger?

A. I do not see any danger.

Q. They have no more interest in censorship than as ordinary citizens, as you and I are. I can understand the European Association being represented, the British Indian Association being represented?

A. After all, the film industry is a trade in general.

Q. I see you advocate that the members should see the films?

A. I think so honestly. It is unwise to depend on the report of the Inspector. I do not suppose the ordinary class of Inspector has the artistic training or even the educational training necessary for the job,—to notice the defects of art, of photography and so on.

Q. He is not so much concerned with that, he is not concerned with the quality of the picture except in its moral tone?

A. It is hard to ask a proprietor to depend upon the judgment of an untrained Inspector. They import films costing several lakhs of rupees.

Q. The difficulty is there are several films which in fact do not require much attention, say, comics, sports and such like things. Films, which do require censoring after careful inspection will be the social dramas which depict life?

A. Yes.

Q. I do not know what proportion they form of the total footage. Would you advocate that such classes of films alone should be examined by two or more members of the Board in order to minimise the work of inspection. If you throw the burden of inspecting every film on the Board or members of the Board, there are so many millions of feet to be examined. Now it is 6 millions and odd both in Bengal and in Bombay?

A. I do not suggest that you should dispense with the services of the Inspector, but in addition.....

Q. You say certain classes of films must be examined by the Board?

A. Yes, before they are certified.

Mr. Green : Does the witness say before a film is uncertified?

A. Before a film is uncertified.

Chairman : There is a certain amount of complaint that notwithstanding censorship there is a certain amount of objectionable matter leaking through.

Mr. Green : The witness only wants them to be examined by the Board before they are banned?

A. Not necessarily.

Chairman : You say that certain classes of films should be seen, before they are certified, by a panel of two or three members of the Board?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you think you can get a sufficient number of men to do such work on the Board?

A. Yes.

Q. It should not be a large body?

A. No.

Q. There should be some uniformity in their standard?

A. Yes.

Q. Having regard to that, if you minimise the work of the Board by confining compulsory inspection by members of the Board to certain classes of films where social life is depicted, you think it would be a practicable proposition?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you think the police should have a predominant voice? The Commissioner of Police is Chairman of the Board and the Secretary is the Deputy Commissioner of Police?

A. That is why I suggest there should be a whole-time Secretary.

Q. You think there should be a good whole-time Secretary?

A. Yes.

Q. Unconnected with the police?

A. The Commissioner may continue to be the president at the custodian of public morals.

Q. What is the object of making him president of the Board?

A. Personally I don't see much harm in his being president of the Board.

Q. Very well. Anyway you want to enlarge the Board by liberalising it with more Indians and with an Indian lady on it?

A. Yes.

Mr. Green: I want to ask you about one or two statements in your written statement. You say nearly one-third of America's gross film income comes from abroad. What evidence do you base that upon?

A. On an article written by the Editor of the Film Review last year.

Q. It is not based on any official figures?

A. No.

Q. We are told a very large proportion of her profits, practically most of her profits, comes from her own market?

A. My statement is not taken from any American official publication.

Q. I think there is a misprint in your statement about the imposition of duty. You say "prior to 1924." That is wrong; surely it is not 1924?

A. Probably it is a misprint. It may have been 1912 or 1922.

Q. Now the Chairman asked you about Japan. We understand it is a fact that 5 years ago she imported 90 per cent. and now only 50 per cent. You don't know how that has been achieved?

A. By developing their own industry without Government aid.

Q. But you don't know for certain?

A. I know for certain; I depend upon the official Year-Book.

Q. You know it is a fact but you don't know how it has happened?

A. No.

Q. I see you approve of the enterprise of certain Indian Railways in instituting travelling cinemas?

A. I do.

Q. The State Railways are doing a lot of work upon that?

A. They are.

Q. Your objection to State aid does not extend to that propaganda?

A. No.

Q. Even though they produce the films themselves?

A. Yes.

Q. I was very interested in what you said about the cinema face. Experts have told us that in film production the cinema face is almost 99 per cent., and acting ability and so on very little, because the directors can teach the actor or actress. I have been struck by the acting ability of people on this side of India. I was a little doubtful whether they had the face, and you suggest you can find the cinema face in Kathiawar, the Punjab and Kashmir?

A. I have travelled a good deal in the course of my official career and I think the Punjab would be a good recruiting ground as well as Kashmir.

Q. You can, you think, find there the type of feature and you think it will be possible to teach them to act quite well enough?

A. Well enough, yes.

Q. As regards actresses have you any suggestions as to how actresses can be obtained for Indian films? You recognise the difficulty?

A. Yes, there is the social difficulty. I won't think it is at present possible to recruit actresses from among Indian ladies of the respectable classes.

Q. Can you suggest how we can obtain actresses?

A. I know for instance in one or two local theatres owned by Madan, they get men from Kathiawar, and Gujerat, and they are perfect actors.

Q. To take female parts?

A. Yes.

Q. Have you seen any European or Anglo-Indian girls appearing in Indian films?

A. Yes, in an Indian film known as "Reincarnation" which was shown here, there were two Anglo-Indian women acting.

Q. Did they, to your mind, play the parts adequately?

A. Fairly well.

Q. Coming to the constitution of the Board, at present the Bengal Board I think has 8 members if I mistake not. You I think agreed with the Chairman that you cannot expand the Board indefinitely, if you are to retain any uniformity of standard?

A. No.

Q. You don't want to see it expanded to more than 10?

A. About 10 or 12.

Q. If you are going to have a board of 10 or 12 and as you advocate that every film should be seen by members of the Board . . .

A. No, I would modify it now to this extent—not every film but certain classes of films should be seen by members of the Board.

Q. Who is to decide whether a particular film is to be seen by the members of the Board or not?

A. In the case of most films reviews appear in the places from which they originate, and I think the Board ought to be in touch with the criticism of those films.

Q. Through a whole-time secretary?

A. Yes.

Q. And if there is any reason to believe that a film is not perfectly straightforward, it should then be seen by members of the Board?

A. Yes.

Q. I am interested in your proposal because the proposal that every film should be seen, seems impossible on practical grounds. You have already told us you are opposed to any Government intervention in any trade venture?

A. Yes.

Q. On the other hand you are prepared to see Government institutions like State railways doing their own publicity?

A. Yes.

Q. In its wider sense, even to the extent of making their own films?

A. Yes.

Q. You have been connected with the "Indian Trade Journal" yourself?

A. Yes.

Q. You think Government is justified in producing a journal of its own?

A. I have my own views on the subject. I think the trade journal is now restricted to disseminating official information. It was quite different when

I was connected with it under Mr. Noel Paton. It used to express his own views and he had very pronounced views.

Q. And now though it is sold for cash, it is you think purely . . .

A. A sort of official bulletin.

Q. It does not compete with commercial journals like "Capital"?

A. Except in the sense that it invites advertisements.

Q. That then is a limited form of State trading to which you do not object?

A. I really don't think it is State trading. It is only the dissemination of official news.

Q. The dissemination of official news, quite. Now the dissemination of news about agricultural improvements, about the prevention of disease and so on—that also one would hardly call a trade venture?

A. No.

Q. Then what is your objection to Government making its own films dealing with these subjects? You don't object to State Railways—you don't object to Government publishing information, but apparently you do object to their making films?

A. My suggestion was that the Indian industry should be given a chance first to make these films for Government.

Q. The evidence before us is to this effect, that there are a number of flourishing film companies in Bombay . . .

A. I have no idea of conditions in Bombay.

Q. And that they are so busy turning out entertainment films for which they get a very good return that they naturally, if asked to tender for Government film work, quote a price which gives them an equivalent profit. If that is established in evidence, would you then be prepared to allow Government to produce their own films?

A. In any case I think it will cost a great deal more.

Q. That is a question of fact which we are investigating. If it could be assumed that Government could do it very much cheaper than a private firm, would you have any objection to Government, at any rate to start with, producing these films themselves, until such time as sufficient companies had come into existence who would tender for Government work at a reasonable rate?

A. I presume it is purely propaganda work.

Q. Purely propaganda. I am opposed just, as much as you are, to Government trading?

A. In that case I don't think there will be any serious objection.

Q. Always provided that it is really cheaper?

A. Really cheaper, yes.

Q. Only one question on the general aspect. I take it you are not frightened of the effect of the cinema at all?

A. No, not at all.

Q. You are not frightened that it has an over-liberalising effect, in showing Indians different habits, different customs, different civilisations—is there any danger in that at all?

A. No danger at all.

Q. Not frightened that the young men and women of India are going to be led away into ways that will do harm?

A. No.

Mr. Neogy: With regard to the question of the manufacture of propaganda films, there are two alternatives. One is for Government to set up a studio of their own and the other is to entrust their work to private agencies. If the Government are to manufacture their own films, supposing they decide to do it, would you support provincial studios for that purpose or a



centralised studio to manufacture the films for all the different provincial Governments?

A. I would support provincial studios, not a centralised one.

Q. Why?

A. My own experience in the Agricultural Department is that agricultural conditions differ from part to part.

Q. And do you consider it necessary to control the studio from the administrative department, that is to say, is a closer control necessary for the purpose of manufacturing films than perhaps would be possible if we had a central studio?

A. Yes.

Q. Then again we have been told that those who manufacture entertainment films find that class of films quite remunerative, but at the same time I may tell you, everyone of these producers has complained to us of lack of finance and has asked for certain Government guarantees and things of that kind. Don't you think that it would be better on the part of Government to entrust their work to these agencies which might enable them to attract greater financial assistance from the market than to embark upon direct financial aid?

A. That was my suggestion.

Q. You would not altogether overlook this particular advantage when you consider the question of the cost of the manufacture of propaganda films, that is to say, the mere cost of propaganda films should not determine this question?

A. No.

Q. Now you have considerable experience of Government and Government methods. Do you suppose that Government can manufacture anything, films or any other thing, at all at a cheaper rate than a private producer can?

A. My experience is just the reverse?

Q. Now with regard to State railways, are you aware that State railways are being run as a commercial proposition and not as a Government department under the new scheme of separation of railway finance?

A. Yes.

Q. And do you know that Government do not undertake the manufacture of text-books also; although they hold themselves responsible for the dissemination of knowledge and imparting instruction to people, they content themselves by laying down the syllabus and leave it to private parties to write the books and get them printed and published. Would you adopt that analogy for the purpose of supporting this proposition of yours?

A. Yes.

Q. Now with regard to the constitution of the Board of Censors, perhaps you are not aware that the Trades Association has already got a representative on the Board?

A. I was not aware of that.

Q. With regard to the question of giving a concession rate for students, I take it your case is that the students will certainly go to the cinema?

A. They will.

Q. You cannot prevent them?

A. No.

Q. The only question is whether you would force them to go to a cheaper seat which would endanger their eyes, or ask the exhibitors to give a concession for their benefit?

A. Yes.

Q. It is not a case of encouraging the students to go to the cinema at all?

A. Oh no; only such students as want to go.

**Written Statement of Lieutenant-Colonel OWEN A. R. BERKELEY-HILL, M.D., I.M.S., Medical Superintendent, Ranchi European Mental Hospital, dated the 8th November 1927.**

1. No.

2. (a) There is a private cinematograph belonging to the European Mental Hospital at Ranchi. On Sunday evenings this is thrown open to the local public of Kanke on payment of a very low scale of admission fees. The entertainments are very popular among the class of Indians living at Kanke, except perhaps men and women (Oraons) from the neighbouring villages. The clerical class (Bengalis, Biharis and Madrassis) are, with their wives and children, enthusiastic on-lookers. So also are the menial staff of the hospital, i.e., Ward Boys and Ayahs. These latter are nearly all Oraons from the local missions and have some education. Besides the above classes, the European and Anglo-Indian staff of the hospital and of the Indian Mental Hospital, come fairly regularly to the Sunday shows.

(b) I cannot give any accurate estimate of the composition of a Sunday evening audience. I should think that the composition of the audience bears a very close relation to the proportion of the classes which go to make up the local population, excluding the local villagers. In other words, the audience is composed mainly of the staff of the two Mental Hospitals and the Government Experimental Farm, Water-Works, Electric Power House and Co-operative Stores, in about the following proportions:—

Anglo-Indians, 10 per cent.

Bengali, Bihari and Madrassi (Sub-Divisional Officers and Clerks), 15 per cent.

Ward Boys and Ayahs (mostly Oraons), 75 per cent.

(c) As we have a special evening once a week for the local children who attend the local school, not so many children come to the Sunday show as might do otherwise. I suppose that on Sundays 5 per cent. are children and those of "impressionable age."

#### PART I.

3. Indian films are certainly the most popular among an Indian audience. An Indian film always draws a big "house" at Kanke.

4. I cannot say.

5. I have never seen or heard of a film depicting Indian life as it is to-day. The film that seems so popular with Indians is one that depicts some of the famous stories and legends of which they are so fond and which still play such a large part in their imaginative life. The Indian film which has drawn the largest "house" at Kanke was one entitled: "Maya Bazar."

(a) I do not think that the Indian films are of very good quality. Certainly they cannot compare to the best British and American films.

(b) They are enormously popular.

(c) I think that it is much more profitable to show an Indian film if the subject depicted is one which deals with a cherished legend.

6. I have no experience but I think it is very likely.

(a) Most assuredly.

(b) I should say to both alike.

7. I have no experience of this point.

8. (a) We do not experience much difficulty in getting films but none are first class as our gate-money is not enough to cover the cost of hiring first-class films.

(b) I cannot reply to this as I am ignorant of this matter.

9. On the average we pay Rs. 25 for the hire of a film but the firms which supply us do so at a reduction out of feelings of charity for the hospital.

10, 11, 12, 13 are all outside my personal experience.

14. I daresay that the film industry might be helped in this way provided it were possible to get people to want to be educated by this medium. I have never been asked to show a film of such description.

15, 16, 17, 19, 20. I am unable to reply to these points from want of experience and knowledge.

21. To answer this question properly it would be necessary to have an explanation of what is exactly meant by the expression "conforming to moral standards." Whose "moral" standards? Indian or European? I favour a moderate amount of "immorality" in films because I think that there are excellent reasons, based on psychological principles, to believe that people (especially children) "work off" during a performance a good deal of their anti-social impulses by identifying themselves with characters in films.

#### *Films of the British Commonwealth.*

22. I cannot answer this from want of knowledge.

23. I do not think that there is much hope of success in this direction except among highly educated Indians. Supposing that a film of a debate in the House of Lords, a fire in London, or a view of the interior of the Sheldonian Theatre at Oxford when degrees are being conferred, was shewn to a mixed audience of Indians. I do not think that more than a very small fraction would suppose for an instant that they were watching anything but a rather tedious piece of make-believe. An audience of this description is just as likely to mistake reality for fiction and *vice versa*. A few years ago I took a very intelligent young native of the Hedjaz (Southern Arabia) to see Mr. Oscar Ashe's famous production of Chu Chin Chow. After the performance was over my guest explained to me in all seriousness that the play we had seen was really being acted in Damascus and had been made visible to us in London by "wireless." I cite this as an example of a type of the difficulties with which people who advocate films for purposes of "propaganda" might have to contend in this country.

#### *Social Aspects and Control.*

24. (a) Not to most Indians. Possibly to some Europeans and Anglo-Indians. The former may be counted upon not to take what they see as having any particular relation with reality.

(b) There seem to be plenty of films in this country which depict "Crime" of all sorts.

(c) I do not think that any particular class of film is harmful as films are not, usually, taken seriously, except, perhaps, by young children.

(d) It is not easy to reply without a definition as to what is meant by a "Sex" film. Indians will scream with delight at seeing a man and a woman kissing each other while Europeans will not be moved until the actors begin to take their clothes off, at which stage Indian interest will probably begin to subside. I think that to watch certain type of "Crime" films has some value for most people as affording them a "safety-valve" to their own criminal tendencies.

(e) I know nothing of this point.

25. No.

26. (a), (b) No.

27. (a) I do not think that Western "civilisation" is worth bothering about. What shore is of it can probably take care of itself. As I have observed above, a good deal of what the ordinary Indian sees in a film is not considered to be *real*.

(b) If the Indian films I have seen have been exhibited abroad I do not think they can have misrepresented Indian civilisation of to-day as all these

films (i.e., those I have seen) deal with the past and a purely legendary past at that.

28. (a) I think it is generally recognised that certain types of crime films have a bad effect on children.

(b) Certain types of films have a decidedly disturbing effect on persons suffering from mental disorders. Films depicting acts of violence, murders, etc., are not desirable for mental patients.

29. Yes.

30. I am in favour of prohibiting children from seeing films which are for "Adults only."

31. No. The censorship can only be really effective if it is carried out by a committee. If left to one single individual it is certain that he (or she) will censor films which stir his (or her) own conflicts (repressed or otherwise). In this way a really good film may be banned to the public. All censors of films should first be psycho-analysed.

32. I know nothing of this.

33. (a) Certainly.

(b) Probably.

(c) Very likely.

34. (a) I am not competent to express any opinion.

(b) I am not competent to express any opinion.

35. (a) I am not competent to express any opinion.

(b) I think that there is a good deal to be said in favour of such an arrangement provided, of course, it is possible to get a person for the job who has the proper qualification, educational and otherwise. As I have observed above I recommend a committee.

36. I maintain that to avoid the condemnation of a film on purely subjective grounds it is essential that every film censor should (besides possessing a cultivated taste in history and art) be subjected to some sort of psychological analysis by a person competent to carry out such an examination.

37. (a) I see no harm in difficult or doubtful cases, in submitting a film to a Board provided it is possible to get a Board constituted from persons in possession of the necessary qualifications.

(b) No.

38—42. No.

43. I do not think so.

44. I presume that the Press could help by refusing to advertise in the newspapers films which are known to be bad from the standpoint of art or morals. Newspapers might follow the example of some of the London weeklies (e.g., "The Nation and Athenæum") and publish short "reviews" of films as is done of books. As so little serious attention is paid to anything said or done by "public bodies" in this country, I do not think that much help can be expected from this quarter.

45. (a) Certainly not.

(b) I think that the registration of film-producing agencies seems a good idea, but I do not see what good would follow an inspection of their studios.

**Oral Evidence of Lieutenant-Colonel OWEN A. R. BERKELEY-HILL, M.D., I.M.S., Medical Superintendent, Ranchi European Mental Hospital, on Thursday, the 22nd December 1927.**

*Chairman:* I must say, Dr. Berkeley-Hill, I am much impressed with your statement. Have you seen any Indian films?

A. Yes, I have.

Q. Where?

A. In Ranchi. We show them for our staff once a week when we can get them.

Q. Where do you get them from?

A. Madan's. Sometimes from Bombay, sometimes from Calcutta.

Q. I suppose your audience is a mixed audience of both Bengalis and Biharis.

A. Mostly Bengalis. As I state, I think, in my statement, I do not think the other people care very much for them. They still adhere to their own type of amusement, participating in it themselves, and their dances which they enjoy very much.

Q. I notice that in your opinion the use of the film for propaganda purposes may be overrated?

A. Very much I think.

Q. But don't you think in a country where illiteracy prevails so largely, the use of the film has its very great advantages?

A. I think it depends on your audience a great deal.

Q. That is what I mean. Take for instance the agricultural population.

A. Well, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, I should believe it was very nearly useless.

Q. You have not seen any of these shows organised by the railways?

A. No, I have not.

Q. Nor have you seen any of those shows run by the Public Health Department?

A. Yes, I have, in Bombay, a propaganda malaria film. Personally I should have thought it was quite useless.

Mr. Green: How long ago was this?

A. At the last Science Congress in Bombay 2 years ago.

Q. I only ask because I did see one myself years ago and it was very bad. I think I must have seen the same film.

A. It might be all right for University students but not for the masses.

Chairman: Take malaria which is brought about by carelessness, stagnating water and so on. Don't you think that sort of education may be given more effectively than by lectures or leaflets?

A. I doubt it very much; but as I say I speak under correction. I am judging the thing on general principles.

Q. Those who have run it tell us they find it very valuable. You do not experience much difficulty in getting what films you want, only you cannot afford to get the better class of films.

A. We cannot afford to get the better class films. People are very kind and send us films at very reduced rates, specially Messrs. Madan's.

Mr. Green: You have got your own projector?

A. Oh, yes, we have got a very fine machine which we bought.

Chairman: I suppose if you could afford it you would be able to get them very easily; there is no difficulty in distribution?

A. None whatever.

Q. You think the cinema is getting very popular with the people?

A. I think it is, I regret to say.

Q. At the same time I notice you take the views, as a psycho-analyst, that it hardly leaves any impression.

A. Very little, except on children.

Q. So that people who say it is a slow poison which is being introduced—you don't believe all that?

A. Not for a moment.

**Mr. Neogy:** On the other hand, you say you favour a moderate amount of immorality in films.

A. I do.

**Chairman:** It is a point of view which one has to rub in with some boldness into a nervous public.

A. I think it will make them less nervous if they see a little crime; but I think by their process of identification with criminal procedure of certain sorts, I think they relieve their own criminal tendencies.

Q. You think it has the effect of curing them?

A. I think it is a safety valve, not a cure.

Q. A boy or a girl with sexual propensities by seeing a film,—probably they cure themselves,—the thing is at an end?

A. I am not sure that I could quite agree to that; but if they harbour any hostile feelings against their parents, to see old people made fools of on the films I think relieves them.

Q. However, you have got considerable experience of the country?

A. Well, I have been here over 20 years and I have been married to an Indian for 18 years; so I have an experience of my own country and of India.

Q. And your advice to us is not to place so much importance on this slow poison theory?

A. On the contrary, I think that is a projection of people's own ideas, personal and subjective views.

Q. I see you believe in the censorship being in the hands of more than one?

A. Certainly.

Q. You would not merely trust to the judgment of one individual?

A. I think it is impossible to get one individual in whom one could repose so much confidence—one individual.

Q. I find it rather enigmatic, what you say in 24 (a) about the generally bad effects of the cinema. You say "not to most Indians but possibly to some Europeans and Anglo-Indians".

A. Yes, because I think the bad class of film is generally of European manufacture and that it passes over the heads of most Indian audiences. But on the other hand I think it is possible that the European films do affect to a certain extent the European and Anglo-Indian population.

Q. Your point is that they have more opportunity for living that life than the Indian has?

A. Living that life and admiring that life.

Q. I was myself struck with the idea of extravagance which must be created in the Anglo-Indian by the Paris modes which are very largely displayed at the cinemas. I am rather surprised the European community do not grumble against it. Their lives must be made miserable by the ladies who see these modes of dress presented in such an attractive way. I see your point of view.

A. It is rather in that respect that I meant it—extravagance and so on.

Q. You think Western civilisation is good enough to take care of itself?

A. I would not bother about it.

Q. People talk of their being misunderstood and think a sort of disrespect is being produced on the minds of the Easterner against the Westerner.

A. I think people get all the respect they are entitled to in life.

Q. It depends more on their conduct here than upon this sort of thing?

A. Oh, surely.

*Q.* Now you believe in classifying films for adults only? You think it would be a wise course to adopt that the Censorship Board should classify certain films for adults only?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* But don't you think it would have the effect of making things more popular—probably when you classify a film as for adults only people will think there is something to see.

*A.* There is that danger. There always is with children.

*Q.* Anyway you think on the whole the advantages of classifying films in that manner would compensate for the danger?

*A.* Yes, I think so. I think films which have scenes of great violence should not be shown to children, knock about films and so on.

*Q.* I noticed that last night when I had my grandchild with me. She turned her face away when two people were fighting and trying to stab one another on the film. The girl turned away in horror and told me "Tell me when the thing is over".

*A.* I have seen my own little daughter disturbed at a scene of *jiu-jitsu* and the struggle and straining that was shown in it.

*Q.* So that you think such cases should be classified as for adults only?

*A.* I think so.

*Q.* Of course the difficulty is in finding out the age and the management having to take a great deal of responsibility.

*A.* Still it is worth doing.

*Q.* I was struck by the fact that scenes which perhaps do not affect us so much do affect children. Now please look at your answer to 26. I would rather you took away the portion referring to the individual.

*A.* I thought this might be more or less confidential. I cited that as an example.

*Q.* You don't want it reported?

(The Chairman directed the press not to report that particular passage in the written statement.)

*Mr. Ncogy:* You have specialised in the diseases of the nerves and psycho-analysis also?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* For how long have you been connected with this Branch?

*A.* For a pretty long time, it has been my profession.

*Q.* Your answers, I take it, are all based upon your personal experience?

*A.* They are based upon the application of such knowledge as I possess of the human mind.

*Q.* Do you use the cinema for entertaining the inmates of your Mental Hospital?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Do you show them the usual kind of films?

*A.* No. I exercise a sort of censorship myself on the films, because our peace has been greatly disturbed sometimes here when certain films were shown.

*Q.* Do you think that the exhibition of films has got a good effect on the inmates?

*A.* On the whole it has a good effect.

*Q.* What class of films do you generally take?

*A.* We usually take topical films. Harold Lloyd, Charlie Chaplain and others. We avoid films dealing with crime, but we never really get high class films.

Q. Do you ever show social dramas?

A. Yes. They certainly like them, but I rather object to them.

Colonel Crawford: I was very interested in your statement about children. I presume you think that the cinema is too strong for the young mind?

A. It would depend upon the film you show the child, because more often the child may not be able to digest what is shown on the screen.

Q. The Chairman gave you an example, and I knew a lady who made a similar statement that she had taken her children to a Jackie Coogan film. There they were pretending to torture the child, which had a depressing effect on her children, with the result that she had to take them out of the theatre?

A. That of course would not be a good film to be shown to children.

Q. You definitely advocate some form of legislation?

A. Most assuredly, because a child's mind is capable of receiving lasting impressions. Of course, it would not be possible to introduce legislation suited to every child, but you could show certain films as "child-shock proof" or something of the kind. There must be a certain amount of caution. Then again parents ought to know enough about their own children to know what films they should not take them to see.

Q. Could you know beforehand what film you are going to see?

A. That again is a difficulty.

Q. This particular mother told me that she did not think that a Jackie Coogan film would contain anything horrible and there would be no harm done in taking her children?

A. But I have always advised parents whose children are neurotic not to take their children to shows except to those exhibiting comics, topical and things of that kind.

Q. As a medical man you think the question is really important?

A. Certainly, a highly neurotic child would be very sensitive, and such things are likely to make a lasting impression on its mind. I should not care to show children films depicting fighting scenes or even a film like "Ben Hur," because that might upset a tender mind.

M. Green: As a father I appreciate what you have just said about the possible harm done to a child. Do you consider legislation a proper way of imposing a responsibility on parents? Supposing a film is certified as fit for adults only, should children be prohibited by law from being taken to the shows?

A. Yes, surely. I think, if I might say so, the Committee will do a great deal of good if they made some improvement in the matter of censorship. I would put on the Board a member having a knowledge of child psychology.

Q. The difficulty about the Board is this. It is really not possible to distinguish what is suitable for a child, what is suitable for an adult and what is suitable for the illiterate. There is that practical difficulty. Therefore I suggest that it is more for those who are in natural control of their children to safeguard their interests rather than the State?

A. Don't you think that there are so many poor parents who cannot leave their children at home when they go to the shows?

Q. If you have the prohibition "for adults only," that difficulty remains?

A. Yes.

Q. I have been extraordinarily interested in your statement. You say that you would like the censors to be psycho-analysed?

A. I think some psychological survey of censors is very important, and I am sure my psychological colleagues in Calcutta would support me there.

Q. Would you say that psycho-analysis is yet an exact science?

A. By no means. I wish it were. I am afraid my recommendations are somewhat ideal, but even then more might be done. There are several



personal friends of mine, eminent in psychology in Calcutta at the present moment, whose help and advice will be most beneficial.

Q. Would it not be somewhat embarrassing for the authority appointing the censors to have to ask the gentlemen suggested whether they would subject themselves to psycho-analysis?

A. (Laughter). If they are men of public spirit, then they should have no objection.

Q. We had a very contrary suggestion that censors should be elected by various public bodies, like the Legislatures, the municipal bodies, Trades Associations and so forth. I take it that will not be acceptable to you?

A. No.

Q. Is not the natural tendency of a psycho-analyst to study not so much the normal as the abnormal case?

A. Yes, it is true, but at the same time everybody will recognise, even though they are not psycho-analysts themselves, what great advances psycho-analysis has contributed to normal psychology.

Q. But may there not be a tendency to be over impressed by the abnormal?

A. I think you are on the safe side there.

Q. I think you suggested that it would be a good thing to have stipendiary censors if you could get them? But it has been suggested to us that we should follow the English method and have a Board of stipendiary gentlemen of high culture and that two of them should examine each film. Is it possible for stipendiary censors of this sort, who would be seeing films every day, say for five hours every week day, that their censoring sense will become blunt by continually seeing films?

A. I should hardly think so. On the other hand, their sight might be affected.

Q. It has been suggested to us that it is a risk?

A. I don't think so.

Q. In your view the ideal method would be to appoint stipendiary censors?

A. Either stipendiary censors of that nature or people who can afford to do the work for nothing.

Q. The difficulty is that the film work in Bengal takes over 2 hours every day, in Bombay the inspection takes about 3½ hours a day, and that is for the whole week, and the tendency is for the work to increase. Various gentlemen have suggested that public-spirited gentlemen will come forward, but when we showed them the practical difficulty, they said that we could not expect them to come every day. It has also been suggested that we should have a large panel so that a gentleman should always be available?

A. Would it not be possible to get a synopsis of the story in the first instance and then read it.

Q. They are usually worse than the films.

A. That will be the fault of the producer.

Q. You mean that if the synopsis purported to show that a film is undesirable it should be banned straight away?

A. Yes, if you were to rely on the censor.

Q. You probably know that the majority of the films come from America, and they also send out publicity material with the films. At the same time the Indian market is of very little importance to America. You would not mind if we stopped the importation of films from America? You don't think of depriving the public of India of a legitimate amusement?

A. I think some of the films are really a bad sort of entertainment psychologically.

Q. At the same time you think they will serve as a valuable psychological safety valve?

A. Some people seem to spend an extraordinary amount of time on films. I notice it amongst my own staff.

**Written Statement of Mr. PRATAPENDRA CHANDRA PANDE,  
M.L.C., Pakaur, Bihar and Orissa.**

1. No special knowledge, only general knowledge acquired by witnessing exhibition of shows.

2. (a) (1) Almost cent per cent.

(2) 50 to 60 per cent. attendance in the Cinema houses increasing beyond expectations (Calcutta).

(b) All sorts of people, students and young well-to-do people being prominent.

(c) No data to work out correct proportion, but quite good number is seen.

3. Love films.

4. I have never seen catering in Indian style. Orthodox Hindus do not like Hotel meals.

5. Presume, not readily available. In Calcutta very few Indian films have yet been exhibited.

(a) Yes.

(b) Yes.

(c) More. Example "Andhare Alo".

6. (a) Certainly amongst Indian audience.

(b) (1) Historical preferable.

(2) Mythological and pieces from the two great Indian Epics.

11. Very likely would help the growth of Industry. In any case would be immensely educative. I strongly advocate the spread of such films. I believe there is demand.

15. Yes, because English films are not appreciated even by all the educated few.

16. By organisation, this is in my opinion possible.

21. Yes. State Agency should be created to undertake the management of the film industry as a monopoly. Only this can stop exhibition of films not conforming to moral standard.

24. (a) Certainly.

(b) I believe.

25. Yes.

26. (a) Yes.

27. (a) Yes.

(b) No knowledge.

28. (a) Yes.

(b) Yes.

(1) Love films.

(2) Various ways obviously clear.

29. No.

30. Yes. 14.

32. Not perfect. Undesirable films are still on exhibitions. Association of exceptionally good men to censoring body.

33. (a) No.

(b) In appreciably.

(c) No.

34. (a) Yes.

(1) Unnecessary.

(2) Should not.

(3) By Provincial representative.

(4) Delhi occasionally meeting at provincial Headquarters.

(b) No provincial board.

36. (a) No.

(b) Yes.

**\*Oral Evidence of Mr. P. C. PANDE, M.L.C., Bihar and Orissa, on  
Thursday, the 22nd December 1927.**

*Chairman:* Where do you live generally, Mr. Pande? You have taken no much trouble to come here all the way?

A. I live in the district of the Sonthal Pargannas in Bihar and Orissa.

Q. Have you got a permanent cinema at the district headquarters?

A. No.

Q. How many cinema shows are there in Bihar and Orissa?

A. There are very few cinema houses there. I saw one or two cinemas in Patna, and I have not seen any outside Patna.

Q. In a place like Cuttack?

A. I have no idea about Orissa.

Q. Or a place like Puri?

A. I don't think there is any cinema there.

Q. Where do you see the cinemas generally?

A. Only in Calcutta.

Q. Don't travelling cinemas come to your parts?

A. Very seldom. Sometimes we see cinema shows at Melas.

Q. Have you at any time seen any of those shows shown in the melas?

A. No. If I see any cinemas at all, it is only in Calcutta.

Q. Do any of the Government departments in your province exhibit any films on public health, sanitation and so on?

A. No, never. Some time ago there was some show given by magic lantern slides, but that was a long time ago.

Q. So that in your province neither magic lantern shows nor cinema shows are given by the Government departments for propaganda purposes?

A. No.

Q. I suppose your people can follow the film if it is shown on the screen? Do you think it will be useful if the Government embarked upon the practice of showing the improved methods of agriculture, hygiene, education and other things by means of the cinema?

A. Yes.

Q. Is not your province a self-supporting province so far as finances go? I think they have always shown a surplus?

A. Not very much. Last year there was no surplus. After all, the province is very small.

Q. But the lawyers seem to flourish there?

A. Because people are fond of litigation.

**Q.** I have heard of fabulous incomes at the bar. How is it you have not got a cinema there? How many towns have you with a population of more than twenty-five thousand?

**A.** I am sorry I could not give you the exact figure.

**Q.** What is the population of your district headquarters?

**A.** About fifteen thousand. Our district headquarters is about forty miles from the railway station.

**Q.** I fear you have misunderstood our question No. 4. It does not relate to meals. It applies to films. Apparently you have not seen many Indian films?

**A.** Yes, I have seen some Indian films in Calcutta. But so far as my province goes, our people are still innocent of the cinema. I only come occasionally to Calcutta and then I go to the cinemas.

**Q.** Do many people from your province come to Calcutta?

**A.** Generally the landholders and business men come here.

**Q.** In answer to 24, you say something, and one would have thought that your experience is so limited that you would not care to answer such a question.

**A.** That is my impression at least.

**Q.** Your impression is as to what happens in Calcutta and not as to what happens in your province?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** On the whole, you would like the spread of the cinema in your province for educational purposes?

**A.** Yes.

**Mr. Green:** Do you want the cinema to spread in your province?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** But you seem to be apprehensive that the kind of films shown here will do harm to your people?

**A.** I think so.

**Q.** May I ask you to explain a little more what you are frightened of?

**A.** Generally love-making scenes and other things are shown here and such things are likely to have a bad effect on our people. I should like agricultural and educational films to be more freely shown.

**Q.** What is your objection to love scenes being shown?

**A.** It is a bad thing for young people to see such scenes.

**Q.** Do you think that they will produce a demoralising effect on your own young men and adolescents? In what way?

**A.** Such things will play on the human mind. How they act exactly, it is very difficult to explain. After all, it is known to everybody that certain things act very adversely on the human mind.

**Q.** Do you consider that such things will induce young men to imitate what they see on the film? Is that your fear?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Are you concerned only with the sex aspect?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** You are not frightened that your young men will adopt other customs which they see exhibited on the screen?

**A.** It is very difficult to answer offhand.

**Q.** I only ask you this because you have a distinct apprehension. But many gentlemen think that such films will produce no effect at all, but that they will have an educative effect?

**A.** I am not prepared to say that by seeing such films our people will imitate the customs of the west. But I object to them only from the sex point of view.

*Q.* How will it hurt your young men if they see such films on the screen? Are they likely to introduce such things into their own families? What opportunities will they have in the present stage of Indian family life in your province? I hope there are no night clubs there?

*A.* We have no clubs in our province.

*Chairman:* They would like to copy dancing, for instance?

*A.* Certainly, they might do it.

*Mr. Green:* Your fear is that they may be affected not so much by the film vision of life as by the film vision of other customs?

*A.* You can say that.

*Chairman:* They don't get a girl to dance with?

*Mr. Green:* You are frightened that it may create a taste for it?

*A.* Yes.

*Colonel Crawford:* Have you seen any of the travelling cinemas in Behar?

*A.* I sometimes see them, but not very frequently. I have seen some shows in Bhagalpur in Patna. Some Bombay people had come there. Sometimes some theatrical parties come there.

*Q.* What are the rates charged for such performances?

*A.* From 8 annas to Rs. 2.

*Q.* That is in the permanent theatres?

*A.* Even the travelling cinemas charge the same rate.

*Q.* Do those travelling cinemas push out into the villages?

*A.* No.

*Q.* Have you had any show in Pakur?

*A.* Yes, some people came there from Calcutta during a *mela*.

*Q.* If a travelling cinema were to visit Pakur, would it be well patronised?

*A.* Yes, the people like to see pictures in the mofussil.

*Mr. Neogy:* I think you have seen films in which life of ease and luxury is portrayed in the western fashion? What effect do you think such films would have upon the young men of our country?

*A.* It can't have a very good effect.

*Q.* Do you think it is likely to produce a sort of discontent among them? For instance, they might try to imitate that sort of life by going to expensive hotels, smoking, drinking, driving in expensive motor cars. Is it not so?

*A.* To a certain extent. Those who are incapable of exercising self-restraint will be very seriously affected.

*Q.* So it is not merely the immoral kind of film that is likely to do harm, but this class of film which may not be immoral or suggestive may also produce great harm among the educated young men?

*A.* In some cases our young men may try to imitate them, I mean those who can afford to spend money, might try to copy them.

*Q.* From that point of view you would like to shut out this kind of pictures, apart from the moral consequences?

*A.* Yes.

### **Oral Evidence of Professor P. C. GHOSH of the Presidency College, Calcutta, on Thursday, the 22nd December 1927.**

*Chairman:* You are a professor in the Presidency College here?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* How long have you been a professor?

*A.* For about 20 years.

Q. Do you know anything about "The Light of Asia"?

A. No, I don't know anything about it. I had nothing to do with it.

Q. Do you go to cinemas frequently?

A. I was on the Board of Censors from 1923 to 1925, and at that time I used to go. But since I have ceased my connection with the Board I have not stepped inside any cinema.

Q. Are you satisfied with the class of films shown in this country?

A. This is a very vague question.

Q. Do you think the cinema is productive of good?

A. So far as western films are concerned, they are perfectly up to the standard, specially the American films are quite up to date. But the Indian films are yet a long way off on the technical side. As regards the nature of the subjects dealt with in these films, I suppose the Indians and Europeans cannot see eye to eye. Certain subjects are perfectly all right from their point of view, but they don't look all right to us from our point of view, and the Indian and European are bound to differ in regard to the nature of the shows. I refer here specially to sex films.

Q. Do you think that some of the films that are shown now should not be shown?

A. They should not be shown from an Indian point of view. That is my feeling. I may give you one instance. They were showing a film, the name of which I forget now, in which there was a scene of Paris life. A girl was placed on a tripod and she was being stripped naked. Just at the critical moment the scene changed and the audience could make out from the gestures the purport of it; I meant it was very very suggestive. When I reported the matter to the Board of Censors, the President asked Mrs. Stanley, who was also a member of the Board, if she was present at the exhibition. She said that she found nothing objectionable in the film, but I found it objectionable. So I say that the Indian and European view points differ in this matter. The Indian is likely to take a stricter view of these than an Englishman.

Q. Then you would like films depicting social life to be examined by two members of the Board?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you think you can always find people to devote the time to do it?

A. Men in service would find it rather trying.

Q. How often were you actually called upon to see a film when you were on the Board for the purpose of certifying?

A. My services were requisitioned not more than half a dozen times in two years. It was not a regular rotation. Sub-Committees were not formed by rotation. Sometimes one member would have more calls than another. The Chairman of the Board used to make the selections, of course with the consent of the members.

Q. You say that during the two years that you were on the Board you were called upon to be present for certification purposes only half a dozen times, and the rest of the films were certified, I take it, without your knowledge?

A. But it was left to me to object to anything.

Q. I think that we might take that to be the normal work of each member?

A. Yes, because the rest is done by the Inspector, who is a European. But lately they have added another Assistant Inspector who merely inspects the Indian films.

Q. So that the censorship has been mostly or mainly in the hands of Europeans?

A. Yes.

Q. Have you been to England?

A. No.

Q. Do you go to theatres? Have you seen the "Black Bottom Revue"?

A. I think it is much worse than what you see on the screen.

Q. So you would have no objection to filming it on the screen?

A. No.

Q. So that your objection is to their life being shown on the stage also?

A. Yes.

Q. So that your point of view seems to be different, and the presence of a large number of Indians on the Board would tend to diminish the number of western films shown in this country?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you know the trade will find difficulty in selecting suitable films?

A. Yes, but I am not quite familiar with the details of the trade.

Q. You object to it not because of its demoralising effect?

A. I don't believe that it has any demoralising effect, but I would rather not show it here in order to keep up the Indian ideals.

Q. Your idea is that you want to keep up the Indian ideas of modesty and you don't want such films to be shown here?

A. I would rather not have some of the society dramas, but because they may have some demoralising effect, not because I want to preserve Indian ideas of modesty.

Q. Are you satisfied that there is no demoralising effect either on the students or on adolescents?

A. I don't think so.

Q. Probably you would not like any young man or young woman to go abroad?

A. I don't think there will be anything wrong in their going abroad.

Q. Won't they go and see things there which you don't want them to see? (No answer given.)

Q. Don't you think that it would be leaving India in ignorance if you adopt such a course?

A. If you find stage girls coming out almost naked, I don't think it is up to the western ideas of modesty either.

Q. Do you like the circulation of illustrated papers?

A. I think there is already a strong movement in England also against such kind of thing.

Q. You have got considerable experience of the youth of this country, and you don't think these things will have any baneful effects on them?

A. No.

*Sir Haroon Jaffer:* When you were asked to examine the films, I suppose you were asked to see only Indian films?

A. I used to see American films also.

*Mr. Neogy:* You have stated that the cinema has no demoralising effect on the student community?

A. I don't believe it will have any such effect.

Q. Dr. West, Principal of the Dacca College, told us yesterday that an amount of acquaintance with the romantic aspect of western life is necessary for a proper understanding of the English people and their literature. Do you think that from that point of view the cinema may be positively helpful to the study of English literature?

A. Do you mean going to shows like Pola Negri films and seeing them? I don't agree with that view at all.

**Q.** Apart from sex subjects, what effect do you think the constant representation of high life, life of luxury and ease on the screen will have on the student community in India? It is not likely to create a sort of discontent?

**A.** The Indian will know that it is beyond him.

**Q.** If there is any danger, it might be from this point of view more than from the moral point of view?

**A.** Yes.

**Chairman:** You would rather expect the Indian to lead a simple life, but if he goes to the cinema and sees these things, his ideas will change?

**A.** Yes.

**Mr. Neogy:** Our standard of life has already been tampered with.

**Colonel Crauford:** May I take it that your general idea is that you deplore the fact that dramatists should draw, for commercial purposes, so largely from the shady side of life?

**A.** I think that has been the bane of modern plays.

**Q.** Could you then suggest how the dramatist could be encouraged to give us a higher standard of story with more inspiration in it?

**A.** I don't know how that question comes in.

**Q.** The dramatist surely in most cases writes for money?

**A.** He may have to write more for the cinema in the future, but at present he does not. They now write mostly for commercial purposes and to make a living. There have been cases where dramas have been screened.

**Q.** Suppose you find some practical method of giving preference to standard stories that had inspiration in them rather than the display of low life, that would lead to the greater production of a better class of stories?

**A.** Certainly.

**Q.** A suggestion was made to us the other day by a witness that you might have a sub-committee of members of the Board to examine the stories in the first instance, and that that committee should grade the stories as A class films, and that any exhibitor showing such A class films should be given preferential treatment. Do you think it is a practicable suggestion? Films are mostly produced in America and Europe and they are brought out here by importers and the Sub-Committee would see the film when it is brought in. Gradually the importer would be induced to bring in more A class films?

**A.** It would be better if you could do it.

**Q.** Do you think the films should be examined by a sub-committee of cultured men?

**A.** My misgiving is that they would not agree because always they would trust to their aesthetic judgment. You can call something good, and I can always differ from you, and more often than not they will come to a negative conclusion. There will not be a general agreement as to the standard of the story.

**Mr. Green:** Is it possible to produce Shakespeare on the film? Is not exaggeration a necessary feature?

**A.** Yes. That is the trouble about it. But I don't see why it should not be possible to introduce Shakespeare on the film if they can act it on the stage. That will appeal to an intelligent audience.

**Q.** You use the phrase "intelligent audience." Can you assume that the average cinema audience is intelligent?

**A.** It depends upon the quarter of the town where the shows are given.

**Q.** Are you satisfied with the subject matter of the Indian films?

**A.** Yes, but the technique is bad. I find that among the Indian productions "Jaya Deva" and "Sankaracharya" are very popular. I have not seen them myself, but I heard it from the ladies who saw these films.



*Q.* Have you observed any tendency in the Indian producer to copy the sensational methods of the western producer?

*A.* I was present at only one of these performances.

*Q.* Do you see the Bombay films?

*A.* Yes, and I am generally satisfied with them.

**Oral Evidence of Mr. D. S. WITHERS, M.L.C. (Labour Nominated),  
Assam Legislative Council, Honorary Magistrate and Tea Planter,  
on Thursday, the 22nd December 1927.**

*Chairman:* Mr. Withers, we are thankful to you for coming all this way from your place of business. You are a member of the Assam Legislative Council?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* I suppose you know Assam very well and have been there for a long time?

*A.* Yes, over 30 years.

*Q.* Are there many cinemas in Assam?

*A.* You might say practically none. There are one or two travelling shows that come round, very poor shows indeed.

*Q.* Where do they go when they come?

*A.* They go from garden to garden, travelling round.

*Q.* Where do they come from? Calcutta?

*A.* Mostly from Calcutta. There is one Assamese enterprising young man who is just starting now.

*Q.* A travelling show?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* How often in the year do these gardens get a chance of seeing these shows?

*A.* Many gardens don't get any chance at all. Those gardens that the travelling shows can get at when the roads are good see very indifferent shows possibly once a year.

*Q.* What sort of films are shown there?

*A.* Very poor films indeed. Practically of no value to the class of people they are shown to. They are all illiterate people from the agricultural classes.

*Q.* I suppose they are very much used-up films.

*A.* Yes, very much used-up and very broken. And bits missing here and there, and breaking down in the showing.

*Q.* You have seen them yourself?

*A.* Yes, I have.

*Q.* You yourself sometimes entertain the labourers with some films?

*A.* Yes, I take my own films. I have many. I found it was hopeless trying to get anything suitable from these travelling people and, as a matter of fact, any films which I got from Calcutta were really not worth showing to the people: they are not suitable. I took the matter up about 4 years ago and got my own plant and produced my own films.

*Q.* Developing and printing and all that?

*A.* Everything, yes.

*Q.* What sort of subjects do you choose?

*A.* Local scenes. Things which the people could recognise what they were. Their own dancing, their ceremonies, their work, their rice fields, their cultivation, elephants and things like that, that interested them.

Q. But that won't improve their outlook much?

A. No, but the time came when they said: what is the *sahib* doing in his own country? Let us see what the *sahibs* are doing in their country. We have seen enough of coolies and animals.

Q. So the cinema habit is growing on them?

A. Certainly. I think so. To start with, I found it necessary to do it gradually with local scenes, because a lot of these people had never seen a picture. They are illiterate and I have seen them look at the screen and then look at the bright light of the lantern and they could not understand it, until it was explained that it was a picture and there were moving objects. There were men moving. And then they grasped it.

Q. I take it you have tried both the magic lantern and films?

A. No, I have never given magic lantern shows. Still they are able to understand after the first dismay is over.

Q. When they once grasp the idea, they understand it and find it very interesting?

A. Yes.

Q. And I suppose you have not been able to give them much of what the *sahib* does in his home?

A. I cannot get suitable films. I can get films of a sort but they are not the class of films I want. Another thing. On the films I get from home I have to pay a prohibitive duty. I got about 12,000 feet of film at home, and paid two pence a foot for it but it cost me nearly 8 annas a foot landed in Assam. It is prohibitive.

Q. For the cheap class of film which you buy abroad you have to pay very heavy duties?

A. Yes.

Q. I suppose you would advocate that the Central Government or some other Government should have a library of films which can be distributed to places like those?

A. Well, I should confine that to educational films and instructional films.

Q. Oh yes, educational in the broad sense of showing the conditions of life, and the daily sanitary problems in the west, how the houses are built there, and how all these things should be done.

A. I think so. They should be controlled in a Bureau of some sort, with a fixed rate for the hiring of them.

Q. They will be very useful for places like those?

A. Very useful. We have a population of over  $\frac{3}{4}$ ths of a million, over 800,000 coolies there. They have only their work, no towns, no amusements of any sort.

Q. It is the only amusement they get sometimes and that too very occasional?

A. Yes.

Q. Probably if you create the taste in them, it would make it easier?

A. I believe that the tea companies and other concerns would put down a cinema plant and show regularly to their coolies throughout the year if they could get suitable films at a reasonable price.

Q. Dealing with industries for instance—methods of leading with certain things—analagous methods. For instance tea estates and rubber estates in other parts of the world. Say Ceylon, for instance, or rubber estates in the Malay states?

A. And also the treatment of animals. How cattle and sheep should be kept.

*Q.* How they are cleansed, and how sanitary surroundings are kept for cattle. And also the type of cattle which you can keep. There are various ways in which you can enlarge their minds and outlook?

*A.* Yes, I think so.

*Q.* You think public funds should be spent for such a purpose?

*A.* Yes, I think so, to start it. A start must be given. When once it is started, private enterprise should do very well provided the cost of import of raw material is not excessive. The trouble now is the import of raw material,—what is called the negative and positive stock, is very expensive.

*Q.* We must make it easier to get them?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* How long have you been trying the experiment of showing films?

*A.* I started in 1922.

*Q.* And how do you manage to finance it?

*A.* It is entirely my own. I have taken it up as a hobby. I have disposed of some of my films at home with which I have managed to cover expenses—films of the tea industry and others. Otherwise it is a difficult matter on account of the cost.

*Q.* Films taken up for topical?

*A.* I don't know. Pathes have had a lot of them for the tea industry, for advertising the purposes of tea cess. So I was able with the proceeds to carry on with taking films.

*Q.* Probably the industry pays for it, for advertising tea and other things perhaps. Now, when you took the films there for this purpose, I suppose you took the local people to aid you, with a little bit of acting which might be needed?

*A.* As far as acting goes, I have no staged pieces. They are actual life pictures.

*Mr. Green:* I understood you to say that the coolies got used to seeing themselves and their familiar scenes and after a time wanted something different?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Do you think they would be interested in seeing what was done in other parts of India?

*A.* I think so. I managed for instance to get a film of "Imperial India" which was taken in Lord Curzon's time, and they were intensely interested in that. Elephants and their trappings and the various sword dances.

*Q.* I saw that myself.

*A.* It was a very broken film.

*Q.* One of the difficulties which has been rather laboured before us is that in India people want to see their own people, they understand nothing else. That if you show a Punjab audience a Bengali film they will turn away from it, they don't want to see it.

*A.* Well, that is true in a way. When I originally started and brought these various films up, I had nobody there. They would look at it for half an hour and go away. When I started my own films this was not my experience, but the time came when they got tired of seeing their own surroundings and wanted to see other parts of the world and other conditions.

*Q.* Your audiences are the typical uneducated class?

*A.* Absolutely.

*Q.* And you think we can safely assume that this phenomenon you noticed there, if similar conditions were produced in other parts, would recur?

*A.* Not the cultured class.

*Q.* I am referring to the uncultured class.

A. Yes. Because all these people are drawn from other parts of India. They had come from Madras, the C. P., the U. P. Even now we have many who come from the Bombay Presidency.

Q. Well, then, they are to a certain extent Bombay people. Could you place before us what it has cost you roughly to produce your films?

A. I shall have to work that out.

Q. It would be very interesting because we have had such varying accounts. We had one Government officer who said he produced films which cost, without overhead charges, 3 annas a foot and we have heard quotations for Rs. 3 a foot.

A. Is that for a copy?

Q. Prints—even Rs. 3 for producing one copy.

A. Of course, you have got to have the apparatus for taking the film and the printing of it. If you take all that into consideration.

Q. I wonder if I can put it in this way. We were told of state railways who were making propaganda films, not counting overhead charges it cost them Re. 1-8 for the first copy or something between Re. 1 and Re. 1-8 for the first copy, and for subsequent reprints about 5 or 6 annas a foot. Does that bear any relation to your cost?

A. Oh, mine would be very much less than that. The positive stock that you print on to costs Rs. 19 for 400 feet, and the negative is Rs. 48 per 400 feet.

Q. Would it very much trouble for you to give us the cost approximately?

A. No, certainly I will work it out and let you have it.

Q. It will be a matter of great interest.

A. You don't want my time, just the actual materials. I can give you the time it would take to produce so much.

Q. If you could, it would be useful. I ask this because we are faced with this problem. Films are being produced in considerable numbers in India, especially in Bombay. And the evidence before us is that these companies produce films at a relatively very small cost, that is to say for commercial films they make so good a profit that they are now prepared to make films for Government at less than that very good profit. They may quote, as I say, anything up to Rs. 3 a foot, and it has been suggested to us that Government by starting a studio of their own, a first class studio, could produce propaganda films which do not require much acting and so on, very much more cheaply. And some of us are attracted by the idea of Government starting such a studio, at any rate, for a short time, chiefly to produce these propaganda films, partly as an inspiration for better technique to Indian producers in the hope that within a few years the Indian industry will be sufficiently advanced to be able to turn out these films for Government themselves at reasonable rates. I was wondering whether from your experience of producing films of your own you could say anything either for or against that idea?

A. I think it would be a very sound plan. It should be at any rate very much cheaper than employing anybody else and do work of good technique.

Q. Even if Government have to pay very considerable salaries for a certain number of foreign experts?

A. Well, it is going to be an expensive matter to start with. If you have to pay high salaries to the men. I should think it would be worth it. I think there is a tremendous opening for the film industry in India once it gets started.

Q. I put that question because you said you want aid until it gets started. Have you actually seen any of the Indian films produced in India?

A. Not the plays. Some films of very poor technique.

Q. You have not seen any of the films produced by Madans here or the Bombay producers?

A. I think I did see a Madan's production once, but I forget what it was called.

Colonel Crawford: I take it that your entertainments are free?

A. Yes.

Q. You said that the attendance was very poor at the beginning but now you are getting better attendance? How often do you give your shows?

A. I have been giving them nearly once a month. I have my own projectors and everything. I have been giving out films to the neighbouring gardens, and charge them something, so that I have been able to give free shows to my coolies.

Q. I suppose the management of the neighbouring gardens paid for it?

A. Yes. The different tea gardens joined and arranged for my shows and agreed to pay me so much per show, and if I get four or five tea gardens in, I am able to give free shows to my coolies.

Q. I gather that the planter would like to give some form of entertainment to his labour and he is looking to the cinema as capable of providing it?

A. Yes.

Q. Will the coolies themselves pay?

A. I think in time they will. In fact, I am building a house which I hope to be able to use for cinema purposes and charge the coolies 2 pice for each show. My experience is that it is not a good thing to give these people everything free. If they have to pay a small amount they will appreciate the thing better.

Q. Do the coolies pay for the travelling shows that go round your districts and see the pictures?

A. The management pays for it, and the travelling company gives free shows to the coolies.

Q. I suppose you never tried to weave a story into your films showing the coolies how to improve their standard of life and so on?

A. I thought of doing it, but could not give the time. I think that a good deal could be done by means of the cinema. It requires a good deal of time to weave these things into proper stories, and each subject must be complete.

Q. I suppose you have not shown your coolies any of the Indian produced films?

A. No. I have not been able to get any of them. I applied to the Director of Public Health, Bengal.

Q. Did you approach Madans at all?

A. No.

Q. It seems to me that in the interests of the industry itself you will lay the seeds of the cinema habit?

A. Yes. I used to deal with Madans, but now I have given it up, because the films are so very poor.

Q. You refer to the very large import duty. You have to pay two pence a foot at home?

A. The films are in excellent order, and I can get them at that rate.

Q. You said that you pay 8 annas a foot import duty, the existing duty works out to .6 of an anna or Rs. 37-8-0 a thousand feet.

A. This was three years ago, and included c.i.f. as well as duty charges.

Q. You say that you had a definite demand from your coolies for films showing other parts of the world?

A. Yes.

Q. You have not been able to get any yet?

A. No. I got one or two films of Pathe's super gazettes showing various scenes in other parts of the world like bicycle races, horse racing and so forth.

Q. Is it possible in a place like Assam for an exhibitor to arrange for a weekly programme with about seven gardens in one area? Would you be able to maintain a travelling cinema in your district?

A. It depends entirely upon what it would cost the garden, if it is going to be given free to the coolies. He can only give his shows during the cold weather for about for months on account of the mud roads.

Q. What sort of price do the gardens pay for night shows? They paid Rs. 170 for two shows, each show lasting for 2 hours. Generally they pay Rs. 90 in the outlying gardens for a show and in some of the out of the way gardens they have paid Rs. 150 for a two hours show. But the man takes his own generator and protector.

Mr. Neogy: You said that you sent some of your films to England. With what subjects did they deal?

A. They dealt with purely local subjects like the tea industry and with the life of the people as well. I took out films relating to the tea industry and sent them home. We have a large number of dances, sacrifices and various local customs, and I filmed all those.

Q. Where are these films shown? In England?

A. Yes; and they have gone to America for the tea consuming industry there. They have been used for advertising purposes for the tea industry in America, France and various other places.

Q. Where are these films relating to dancing, worship, etc., that you took out, shown?

A. They are shown by the tea industry in various parts of the world, and are used mostly for advertising purposes.

Colonel Crawford: What about the sporting ones, the Khedda?

A. They have not been sold at home.

Mr. Neogy: When you calculate your cost of production, do you take into account your own services, overhead charges, interest charges, depreciation and so on?

A. I don't take anything of that into account.

Q. They are items which a private producer would take into consideration, so that the figures you would supply would not be a safe guide for comparison?

A. My figures relate entirely to the material, and the overhead charges, labour and time are all my own.

Q. Then you don't incur any expenditure for engaging actors and actresses?

A. No.

Q. Do you think that the propaganda films of the nature of which you have experience, afford any very great scope for high class technique?

A. The technique in photography, yes, but technique in the setting up of the stage, no.

Q. Judging from the tastes of the people, I mean the uncultivated taste, don't you think that we don't need very high class production for publicity work among these people?

A. I think it is necessary and in the interests of everybody that the best should be done.

Q. We could keep it as an ideal before us, but is it necessary that Government should put themselves to the expense of equipping very first class studios merely for making these propaganda films?

A. We don't want dramas for propaganda work. The scenes that we require would not cost so much as most of them will be taken in the open air

not affording any great scope for a first class studio. For producing first class propaganda films you require first class apparatus.

*Q.* You won't need any artificial light and other things that are required in the studios?

*A.* No.

**Letter, dated the 28th December 1927, from Mr. D. S. Withers, M.L.C.**

With reference to the request made by the Committee for a note on the cost of manufacturing films from the exposed stock I give the following details of my actual costs excluding cost of labour and apparatus:—

	<i>Rs. a. p.</i>		
Cost of Negative Stock per foot . . . . .	0	2	0
Cost of Developing Negative per foot . . . . .	0	0	2
Cost of Fixing per foot . . . . .	0	2	1-21
<b>Total cost of Negative . . . . .</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3-21</b>
<hr/>			
Cost of Positive Stock per foot . . . . .	0	0	10
Cost of Developing Positive per foot . . . . .	0	0	1-25
Cost of Fixing Positive . . . . .	0	0	1-21
<b>Total cost of Positive . . . . .</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0-46</b>

With the help of an unskilled coolie I am able to do 800 to 1,000 feet in a day.

With reference to what can be done in an inexpensive studio or dark room I may remind the Committee of the Mount Everest films that were prepared under these conditions near Darjeeling.

**Oral Evidence of Mr. J. W. McKAY, Chief Inspector of Films for Bengal, on Thursday, the 22nd December 1927.**

*Chairman:* You are the Inspector of the Bengal Censor Board.

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* How long have you held that office?

*A.* I held it at first in a permanent capacity in 1920, (when the Act was first brought into force) for a period of six months on a salary of Rs. 600 to 900 with a motor-car allowance. I was then recalled by Government to take up the special post of Registrar to the Bengal Legislative Council. About 18 months after that, I was made a part-time Inspector in addition to my own duties. I have held the post since.

*Q.* I suppose nearly all Western films go through your hands.

*A.* Yes. All.

*Q.* Please understand that if we put any questions, it is not by way of criticism, but we want to get some information for ourselves. This morning it has been brought to our notice by a witness,—and I saw it afterwards—a statement in the Cinema Year Book to this effect. This is the statement made there. "In India anything which might show the superiority of a black over a white is not allowed." Do you observe that rule?

*A.* As a general statement I don't agree. As evidence of it I may point to the fact that we frequently allow films portraying football matches in which Europeans and Indians are on opposite sides, *e.g.*, Mohan Bagan *vs.* Calcutta, when Mohan Bagan beat Calcutta.

Q. I was rather struck with the fact that it was published in England?

A. Some years ago when Jack Johnson, the Negro boxer, fought Burns, a white man, and beat him the contest was brutal and gruesome. There were several scenes of blood. That was stopped during the time of the Voluntary Boards as tending to stir up racial antagonism between white and coloured people.

Q. But this is a general statement. I wonder where they got it from.

A. I can produce evidence to show that where contests, even exciting contests between coloured and white people, are in the nature of sport or friendly rivalry, we take no exception to them. It is only brutal scenes to which we object.

Q. You don't think then there is any justification for that statement in the Cinema Year Book.

A. No, not for a general statement of that sort.

Q. Now we want information about some detailed cuts that have been made and which are noted in your Register. Can you tell me why you made the cuts in 7267?

A. The Secretary has given me a list of the cuts on which the Committee want information, but I would suggest that I should first be permitted to make a general statement as to what I understand to be "political" reasons under which cuts are made and you can then question me on detailed cuts.

Q. I don't think that we shall want to trouble you with the detailed cuts made in each and every film?

A. I want first to make a general statement so that you will know exactly how the censorship works in Bengal.

By "political reasons" is meant films scenes and sub-titles—

- (1) derogatory to foreign powers friendly to His Majesty, or holding up such powers in an unfavourable light, by implication or otherwise;
- (2) derogatory to the Government of the day, whether in England or India or the Dominions, or to parties in opposition to the Government or to individual members of Government or individual politicians by implication or otherwise;
- (3) derogatory to Royalty, especially of England by implication or otherwise;
- (4) derogatory to coloured or white people as such or to sections of them, by implication or otherwise;
- (5) dealing with the overthrow of the existing form of Government by bloody revolution or attempts to overthrow it by anarchical means or eulogising or sympathising with actions of this character.

The first point needs no explanation. In regard to the others, I may make my meaning clearer if I give a few examples. Suppose we had sub-titles as follows:—

(a) "The policy of the Government of India is to starve the nation-building departments." We have often heard this accusation, or again—

(b) "The policy of the opponents of Government is a senseless blind obstruction to Government." We have heard this also—

Or again—

(c) A scene of a drunken dissolute kind.

Or again—

(d) "The community (it may be Hindus, Muhammadans, Christians, English, Merwaris, or any other community) as a race, are offensive in many of their social customs." It



would be my obvious duty in regard to all of these to suggest their excision. It is not as if I would excise (a) because it was against Government and keep (b) because it was against the opponents of Government. I think I can produce sufficient evidence to disprove that any partiality of this kind is shown by the Inspector or the Bengal Board in any film excised on political grounds.

The position we take up in Bengal in this matter—as I understand it—is that the cinema, so far as it deals with the exhibition of films for public entertainment and amusement should not be used ordinarily for political propaganda, especially when political propaganda is coupled with anarchical doctrines or an appeal to force.

I wish also to make one further general statement to the effect that from the very nature of things, we are unable to give any evidence except in one or two cases as to details of scenes and sub-titles of a legitimate character which we have allowed in other films passed.

Q. I suppose if Hampden were depicted on the screen, you will object to it. Apparently this has reference only to Indian films or has it reference to foreign films as well?

A. I will come to that presently, Sir.

Q. You mean that unless there is anything derogatory in them you will not take exception?

A. In sub-titles, it, of course, all depends on the scenes that follow or precede them. Take for instance the following:—

Omar, the tent maker.

Excisions—

The word "Prince" to be substituted for the word "Shah" wherever it occurs.

Part VII. Omit the word "fanatics" in a sub-title.

The word "Shah" implied the Shah of Persia, who is shown as a sensual imbecile. The word "fanatics" was used in connection with a crowd which was taking part in the *Ramzan* procession.

These omissions were suggested by the Inspector and agreed to by a sub-committee. The first excision, it will be seen, comes under the first category, viz:—derogatory to the ruler or ex-ruler of a friendly power.

The reason for the second is obvious.

Then this one—The Birth of a Nation. The cuts here will bring out the non-partiality of the Board to which I have alluded before.

Excisions will be found noted against serial No. 7267 in the Register.

The first six reels of this film dealt entirely with the Civil War in America and were free from any objection. Then comes the assassination of President Lincoln, followed by a policy, in the words of a subtitle, "of harshness towards the Whites of the South. The South is thrown back into a worse state than war. Their lands are over-run by a hungry hordes of vengeful politicians and self-seekers. The Negro is cajoled into a false understanding of liberty and in his ignorance is led into excesses." The cause of the Negroes is championed by a half-breed who demands for them.—

(1) equal rights,

(2) equal politics, and

(3) inter-marriage with Whites.

Then occur several lawless scenes of mob rule. Of Negroes elbowing Whites off the polling booths and not allowing them to record their votes, etc.

An instance is also given of an attempt at rape on a white girl by a Negro.

Then, in the words of another title, "out of it come the ghostly garbed crusaders of a terrible era"—this had reference to the Ku Klux Klan—

"to set things right and return the lands and liberties of peace to their rightful owners." Incidentally the rightful owners here had reference to the whites of the south whose homes had been despoiled by the north with the help of the Negro element.

The excisions I made fall under two categories, viz:—

(1) those which were derogatory, by implication of course, to coloured nationals, especially to Indians, and

(2) those which incited racial antagonism, as follows:—

(1) scenes at a union meeting of Negroes who after being given the vote carried placards demanding inter-marriage with white girls;

(2) scenes showing white men, who were in a microscopic minority, being roughly handled and prevented from recording their votes by the newly enfranchised Negroes;

(3) Mob scenes showing Negroes celebrating their victory at the Polls in which white men and women were roughly handled;

*Q.* I suppose that film was exhibited in America freely where, if at all, objection should have been taken?

*A.* I have no knowledge if any objections were taken in America, and, if so, what action they took there on the objections.

*Q.* Do you have any means of knowing what action they have taken?

*A.* Only from newspaper reports. I cannot recollect whether any objection was raised there.

*Q.* You will agree if it is objectionable it should be more objectionable in America?

*A.* I submit that by implication it is very objectionable here; and if it had not been censored it could have been used against the people of India.

*Q.* You think it will have an implication that in India the whites would rise against the blacks?

*A.* Not exactly that. I thought that some people might use it for the purpose of showing that Indians after they had been given entire self-Government, might mis-use their powers even to driving the whites out of the country by force.

*Mr. Green:* Do you mean misrepresentation of non-white people?

*A.* Yes, of all coloured people.

*Chairman:* Was the film true to history?

*A.* I hope not. I do not know whether the scenes I have cut were true to history. But the film tried to depict the events leading up to the Assassination of President Lincoln according to history. After that I cannot vouch for its historical accuracy.

*Chairman:* Now to cut the thing short I want to know why the Parliament scenes were cut out.

*A.* These had reference to the newly constituted Parliament in which the Negroes, who were in a majority, are shown in most disgusting scenes, drinking at their seats in Parliament, legs on tables, showing utter lack of discipline and order, fighting with each other, ogling women and such like scenes. One scene is shown where a Bill is passed by the Parliament at its first sitting sanctioning Negro marriage with white girls. There was no doubt that the producer wanted to make the point that Negroes were utterly unfit for the franchise as they could not make proper use of the new powers given to them. This part of the film was particularly derogatory to people of a coloured race, and especially by implication to Indians. There were other scenes of a like nature which were ruthlessly cut, e.g.:—

(5) The Court scene in Reel VIII was particularly bad as it showed the Negroes as so prejudiced against the whites that they denied them justice in the law Courts.

(6) The incident in Reel X was also a bad one as it showed the relentless pursuit of a young white girl by a sensual and ruffianly Negro for immoral purposes, i.e., rape. This incident according to the producer led to the formation of the "Ku Klux Klan."

Q. Do you think the Indian people would resent it?

A. They certainly would.

Q. If it is a matter of history, did any Indian on the Board take that view?

A. The whole Board accepted my Report.

Q. Who witnessed that particular film, can you tell us? Which sub-committee witnessed it? Was there any Indian member on it? Generally only two members view those things?

A. I think there were two Europeans.

Q. So that your point of view is that Indians might sympathise with the Negroes so shown.

A. My point was that these scenes which were shown were meant to lower the Negroes and might be used against Indians.

Q. And that the Indian might object to lowering the Negroes?

A. That is right, as being against coloured people in general and by implication against themselves.

Q. I am afraid you understand the Indian very little from my point of view. You think perhaps that our sympathies are more with the Negroes than with the Whites?

A. We thought that the situation by implication might be applied to India, and that Europeans may themselves consider that if the Indians get self-Government then a repetition of what happened in America might take place here.

Q. They can use history for that purpose, and they don't want films for it.

Your point is that the Europeans in this country were likely to use it as an argument against us?

A. That was the underlying idea.

Mr. Neogy: I want to know something about No. 7640, the omissions of certain subtitles in the film—"The Bright Shawl."

A. The excision were as follows:—

Part II. Omit the sub-title—"I do not like the colour of your skin. It is too dark."

Part III. Omit the sub-title "And my brother's only sin was to love his native land."

Part IV. (1) Omit the sub-title—"This is the body of an impudent Cuban servant, etc. I shot him. Was I not right."

(2) Omit the sub-title—They will force us to remonstrate. Then it will be death to our men and worse to our women."

(3) Omit the sub-title—"If the King of Spain did this to a woman of mine there would be a new king to-morrow."

This film dealt with the revolt by the Cubans against the authority of Spain; in other words in revolt against a friendly power. The sub-title in Part II was omitted as being derogatory to coloured people and by implication to Indians. The sub-title in Part III followed, as far as I can remember, the killing of an out-and-out revolutionary agent, who was in revolt against lawful authority. The main reason which led to my suggesting its excision was the fact that it created sympathy for—and thereby in my opinion a probable desire for emulation of—a man who was actively engaged in upsetting the Government of the day by fostering

revolution by the methods of the revolver and the bomb. I maintain that films which are meant for public entertainment and recreation should not be used for inculcating suggestions of this kind, and for this reason the excision, in my opinion, was eminently justifiable. In addition it must be remembered that the question of a friendly power had to be considered. The first excision in Part IV gave the impression that there was justification in killing a man simply because he was a servant and a Cuban. It was meant to convey the idea that the Spaniards were wont to do this as a matter of course. Obviously this was a derogatory reference to nationals of a friendly power.

The reason for the second excision in the same part was partly the same as the first, but mainly because it contained an indelicate reference.

The third excision was made for obvious reasons.

The excisions were agreed to by a sub-committee.

They come under the first and fifth categories, viz.:—derogatory reference to the nationals of a friendly power and dealing with the overthrow of the existing form of Government by force or bloody revolution, or sympathising with activities of this character.

*Chairman:* So that you will not allow on the film any exhibition of the revolution in England?

A. We won't allow it of any country although it is a matter of history, when the whole idea is one inculcating the idea of changing the existing form of Government by force.

Q. Don't people read these things in history?

A. Reading history is one thing, seeing lurid scenes and pictures another.

Q. Lurid scenes can be avoided.

A. When you are watching a picture it has an entirely different effect to the effect produced in reading a book.

*Mr. Neogy:* In this particular case, the scene was not omitted, only the title was cut.

A. The title was cut because it exaggerated the idea.

Q. The scene was still there of course?

A. Well, we cut where we saw any scene of a particularly bad kind.

*Chairman:* I see your point of view. Then we come to the next—"Fortune's Mask."

A. The excisions were as follows:—

Omit in Part I.—The following sub-titles:—

(i) what are the additional expenses;

(ii) I have revised the Civil List—increasing all salaries by one-third, etc.

(iii) he is getting popular—have him investigated.

Omit in Part III—the sub-title—"This Irishman is interfering with the collection of taxes."

Omit in Part V—"There is nothing to fear. Our spies never heard or whispered a name capable of inflaming the people to rebellion."

The film dealt with the story of the assassination of a good President of a South American Republic by persons hired by his rival—an evil man—who then succeeds to the Presidentship. He is a hard ruler who imposes fresh taxation on the people, notably one "of revising the Civil List to increase all the salaries of the officers, including the President." My reason for suggesting the omission of the first two sub-titles was the fact that at the time, especially in this Province, allegations of the above character were being freely used against the Government, and I considered that the film might be used to demonstrate however unjustly the applicability of the situation of the Republic under the regicidal President with

the political situation in India. And the fact that the situation in the Republic was so shown that the people were being educated to change the established order of things by bloody revolution led me to suggest the excisions.

In regard to the next sub-titles, these had reference to a foreigner in the land who was inciting the people to rebel by force and to refuse payment of taxes.

I am unable to say exactly why I objected to the word "popular," but it may have been for the fact that I felt that the word was intended to justify or encourage the action of a foreigner in interfering with the Government of the country and inciting the people to rebellion.

The last title in my opinion gave the idea that if one dependable patriot could be found to lead the rebellion, that course should be followed.

Q. If you were given the power of censoring historical books I suppose you would do the same thing.

A. Books and pictures, as I said before, I would deal with entirely differently. Even with regard to theatres, I think they are on a different footing to pictures because of the very large number of people who see the pictures.

Q. Then we come to "Hutch of United States of America."

A. The film in my opinion endeavoured to show how very easy it was for a revolutionary party in a country—suitably led—to bring to an end by force of arms the Government established by law. We omitted a sub-title as follows:—

"Dreamed of a day when the Government would be a Government of the people by the people."

The sub-title, in my judgement, started the impression that the person shown as dreaming came to the decision that in the case of a country ruled by aliens, the only solution for a change was bloody revolution. It is perhaps needless for me to add that if the film was not one treating of bloody revolution and rebellion, I would certainly have taken no exception to this sub-title.

Q. But the scenes are left there, only the titles are removed.

A. We cut out such scenes as we thought objectionable.

Q. Not in this part.

A. But you see the difference between the two. The only solution the dreamer had was to change the form of the government by a revolution. You must read the title with the scenes that follow.

Q. I quite recognise it is difficult to decide merely on these stray things, but at the same time the omission is not in the scene but in the title.

A. Here, the title was really in trouble. In this case an Indian agreed to the excision and of course they agreed to it at the full meeting of the Board.

The next modification we made was as follows:—

For the sub-title—"We will hold a mass meeting in the square and force the President to declare peace or war"—sub-title "We will hold a mass meeting in the square."

This modification was to remove as far as possible the idea that force by arms had to be used. It will be noticed that we took no objection to the holding of a mass meeting. This modification is significant of what I feel is our whole attitude in this respect. We endeavoured, as far as possible, here, to remove the idea of the use of force by arms and to substitute the idea that agitations of this character should proceed on constitutional and orderly lines. The trouble was over the word "force." Any thing in connection with force was removed from the sub-title.

The next modification we made was as follows:—

For the sub-title "But that is murder, they are our own people—" substitute "Must I obey your orders, Sir?"

This modification was mainly an attempt to remove the rather dangerous doctrine that was sought to be inculcated that persons acting under lawful authority are justified in disregarding orders to proceed against their own kind even when the latter are breakers of the peace or are endeavouring to overthrow the existing form of Government by force, for fear of being classed as murderers.

In Part 4 the following sub-title was omitted, *viz.*: "We are fighting for tyranny as your country once did." This was removed because it was a confirmation of the view taken in regard to the first sub-title that a country ruled by aliens was necessarily under tyranny and that the ruling power should be overthrown by force.

In fact the whole idea underlying all these excisions and modifications was to tone down the revolutionary aspect of the film.

Q. Now we come to 7966—"The Revenge of Pharaoh."

A. For excisions *see* serial No. 7966 in the Register.

The idea underlying all these cuttings was to eliminate the "religious" phase of the question. The film dealt with the excavation of tombs in Egypt by a party of Europeans who had been permitted to carry on these excavations by lawful authority, *i.e.*, the "Excellency" referred to in the first sub-title in Part I was an Egyptian national. The sub-titles gave the wholly wrong impression, in my opinion, that Europeans have no respect or toleration for the religious susceptibilities of oriental peoples and were meant chiefly to incite hatred among a certain portion of the audience by an appeal to their religious susceptibilities.

The sub-titles which attempted to justify an appeal to force of arms against lawful authority were also omitted.

The last title was modified because it was derogatory to an oriental.

Q. Was the film exhibited in Egypt do you know?

A. I have no knowledge.

Q. It was exhibited in France and England?

A. I believe it was shown in England.

Q. No body objected to it. But here in India you think we are more interested in Egypt.

A. No, Sir. It was not that. It is always a question of implication where you are dealing with an Oriental people. Here the appeal was to the religious feeling of Muhammadans.

Q. So you err on the side of overcaution?

A. I am afraid so but in these cases, I submit, you cannot be too careful.

Q. Now we come to No. 7950—"Circe the Enchantress." It says that "the exhibitors being unwilling to make the suggested excisions the film is declared to be an uncertified film." There is no indication what the excisions were.

A. This was a pretty bad film.

The part of the modern "Circe" and certain scenes in connection with her were played with a certain amount of abandon.

I made the following excisions in the film to remove this defect, *viz.*:—

Part 2. Omit incident of man tying bracelet round woman's leg.

Part 4. (i) Shorten scenes of "Circe" near bowl of wine;

(ii) Omit sub-title—"Guzzle Swine" and some riotous scenes following it. Also a scene showing "Circe" falling into a man's arms.

(iii) Omit a scene showing "Circe" riding on a man's back who is on all—fours.

(iv) Shorten some of the gambling scenes—also one of the two scenes showing "Circe" at the band.

Part 5. (i) Shorten some of the scenes in this part showing "Circe" inebriated.

(ii) Shorten the scene showing her dancing with a man.

(iii) Omit a scene showing "Circe" being roughly handled by a man.

Part 6. Omit a scene showing a man handling "Circe."

Q. How many excisions.

A. I suggested nine. I don't know what length they were. Then I thought I might not have pruned the film enough and I suggested that a sub-committee might view it to see whether I had cut enough. The sub-committee sat and viewed the film as cut by me and suggested two further excisions which were I think of a rather drastic character. Madan's, who I think were the exhibitors, objected to these further cuts by the sub-committee and we declined to certify the film without them. It was sent to Bombay and passed there.

Q. Was it shown in England?

A. Yes, but I think only for public exhibition. I mean to say that if the conditions in England were the same as in India, it might have been banned if these same excisions were not made. The certificate is only "public". I think that difference has to be noted.

Q. Now we come to No. 7999—"A Guilty Conscience." There is a remark against it as follows—"Tends to lower the prestige of the British Government."

A. The film was derogatory to the Government services in India, in that it represented a very highly placed officer of Government, so far forgetting himself as to misuse his official position to encompass the death of a junior brother officer for his own sensual gain.

This officer is shown as committing a grave dereliction of duty in not relieving a serious ill man who was reported medically unfit to carry on his duties, in order that the latter might die and thus free his widow for marriage to the officer.

This follows the precedent of the British Board where it is a recognised canon of censorship not to permit scenes or incidents calculated to bring the public services or professions into contempt or ridicule.

Q. Is it in India?

A. It was "shot" in America, but had an Indian setting.

Q. In America some servants behave like that.

A. I hope not. They, anyhow, have a peculiar idea of service out here.

Mr. Green: The scene is in India?

A. Yes, but it was set with a weird idea of India.

Q. Do you mean it represented Indian life. Does it depict an Indian servant.

A. A British official in India.

Q. Was it based on any novel? I remember to have read a novel of that sort in Bengal. I think by an Anglo-Indian.

I don't know. But in regard to this film you will find that later on a film called "The Prick of Conscience" was certified. This was the same film reconstructed. It was made into an ordinary story without reference to a British official and we passed the film.

Q. The film "*A Royal Romance*."

A. I would just read the following advertisement in regard to the film to give you an idea what it was about—"It is a rich warin romance of Indian seas, where hordes of Muhammadans, lashed to furious hatred of infidels, attack a handful of whites in thrilling spectacular battle."

The cuttings were intended to remove as far as possible all scenes of mob violence and all matter which smacked of racial antagonism and racial hatred leaving mainly that portion of the film which dealt with a harmless love romance and one or two of the lesser objectionable portions of the other scenes for purpose of continuity.

*Q.* It appears to me from the excisions you made the whole film might have been banned.

*A.* Well, the importers were agreeable themselves to any excisions that the Board might make in this film.

*Q.* And then you altered the title of the film.

*A.* We alter titles in nearly every case where we reconstruct a film, so that a copy might not be used under our certificate.

*Mr. Neogy:* But what was the particular reason for this substitution in part 2 for a portion of the sub-title of the words "And the two men who bought the island from the natives are dead."

*A.* The second title was the more correct from the narrative point of view. They had bought the island.

*Q.* Do you check these films from the point of view of accuracy of detail?

*A.* If it is an inaccurate statement derogatory to either white men or coloured men, I check it from that point of view.

*Chairman:* Even if a white man did so 200 years ago. Supposing a white paper or red paper were trotted out.....

*A.* If it were inclined to raise racial antagonism I would object to it because I consider the cinema is more meant for recreation of a healthy kind than for rousing tempers.

*Q.* How are historical dramas to be reproduced then?

*A.* Not for propaganda purposes, or to raise antagonism between Indians and Europeans.

*Q.* But take history. Supposing a film deals with the struggle between the French and the English in the early part of the seventeenth century.

*A.* A struggle between two white peoples?

*Q.* I mean in India, supposing somebody filmed the struggle for the Indian Empire between the Englishman and the Frenchman.

*Mr. Green:* The capture of Madras by the French?

*A.* Without the use of any Indian troops? It is only when Indians come into the picture at all that we look for objections in order to prevent any racial antagonism or if the picture is of a revolutionary character. It is not really a question of who wins.

*Chairman:* Supposing it is Clive marching at the head of Madrassi sepoys and the picture shows that the Madrassi sepoys did a lot to win the Empire.

*A.* I would imagine we would follow the precedent of the Voluntary Board. They banned a film relating to the Indian Mutiny. In any case it is difficult to answer the question without seeing the picture.

*Mr. Neogy:* I wonder whether you remember the case of "Mons." Have you seen that film?

*A.* No, I have not seen it here.

*Q.* Well, in that film Belgians were shown in an unfavourable light.

*Chairman:* He has not seen the picture.

*A.* But I might answer that in another way. We had a film "The Big Parade" in which there were titles derogatory to the Germans. We knocked them out.

*Q.* There are so many excisions here that I thought you might altogether have banned the film?

*A.* No, Sir. If you consider the point you will find that these fighting scenes were really bought in by way of incident, "where hordes of Muham-madans lash themselves into a fury against infidels, etc."—all this was really incidental to a love story, and the picture was perfectly all right without them. I don't know how many parts there were but up to five parts



it was a good love story. They brought in these other parts to make the picture more spectacular.

Q. In every part almost you have got excisions—parts 9 and 10 have been in your own words “unmercifully slaughtered”.

A. I am afraid that is so. I removed all scenes of mob violence.

Q. Has your Board ever considered that if you show mob violence and the results of it to people, that might have the opposite effect of dissuading them from violence after seeing what effects are produced from mob violence?

A. I do keep that in view and we allow sometimes scenes of that character but where there are coloured against white mob scenes, that raise racial antagonism, even if authority wins the day, we excise them as much as possible.

Q. That is why I suppose probably the Editor of the Year Book in England says that is the rule observed in India. Now the next film. “Hunger of the Blood”. 8,210. I will tell you what I want about it.

A. I don't know whether I am in a position to give the information.

Q. “Omit the title ‘I admit it. I am also a coward and worship convention and dollars’. Omit also the title ‘I am an Indian’.”

A. My notes do not help me very much here. From what I remember of the film, and if my recollection serves me right, the omission in the sub-title was about a white man refusing to countenance a mixed marriage, i.e., because it raised a question of a racial character. The word ‘Indian’ has no reference to an Indian of this country but to Red Indian.

Q. What is the objection here. “I am a worshipper of convention and the dollar.”

A. The first title refers to mixed blood.

Q. I have not asked about that. I recognise the value of that. Supposing a man were to say I am a worshipper of convention and dollars, are there not such people who do that sort of thing, whether white or coloured.

A. It may be that this sub-title had reference to the previous title and when the former one was omitted the latter was meaningless.

Q. Because a white man said so, you remove it.

A. I hope it wasn't that. As I say my notes do not help me much in regard to these excisions.

Q. I only wanted to know what was in your mind. Then we come to 827. I will tell you what I want. I suppose you remember the film “The Rat” very well. There are two incidents where a negro is seen with a white girl. We saw the film only recently in order to compare it with “The Triumph of the Rat”. The fighting scene is there.

A. But it has been shortened by half.

Q. Why do you want to omit the place where a negro is seen with a white girl?

A. It was thought that Europeans might take umbrage at that.

Q. It is not a misrepresentation; I mean in those places negroes are seen with white girls. In fact I have seen, in Paris, negroes dancing with white girls. In fact the white girl fancies the Negro much more than an Indian. I speak from my own knowledge of what I saw in Paris. Several white girls seem to prefer dancing with negroes in such places.

A. I think that there are a large number of Europeans who would take umbrage at a scene like that. It cannot be helped even if it is a fact. It creates bad blood.

Q. And you think the Censorship Board ought to take note of that.

A. Of anything which causes racial antagonism or causes bad blood between different races.

Q. How can it cause bad blood? It is actually done. You have the history of America. Supposing an Indian student at Cambridge dances with a white girl?

A. I never excise a scene like that if it was in good society—that is to say in a ball room. This happens to be in a low down drinking saloon. The environment was low and the association of the white girls with the Negro was one of lust. But I certainly would not excise any scene where an Indian is seen dancing with a white girl in polite society.

Q. 8483.—“The Merry Widow.”

A. There is no remark there.

Q. We were rather struck—you passed that film, the Bengal Board stands for so much strictness. Have you got any notes about it?

A. In reviewing the picture, I stated that some of the love scenes were played with a certain amount of abandon, but could find nothing which, in my opinion, went quite beyond the limits.

I also drew attention to the fact that some of the dresses worn by the girls, especially the heroine, were of the scantiest description but here again I could not say it was outrageous.

I asked, however, that two members of the Board should view the film at its opening performance in case it required pruning here and there.

The following modifications were then carried out—

- (1) Shorten a dancing scene of a woman indecorously dressed;
- (2) omit certain scenes at the Restaurant showing women indecorously dressed;
- (3) shorten a scene showing the woman indecorously dressed in a lengthy interview with the Prince.

Those were the three cuts made by the two members of the Board.

Mr. Green: If excisions are made after certification, is not that shown in the Register?

A. We recall the certificate and then endorse it.

Chairman: 8509.—“Greater than Marriage.” I will tell you what struck me here. You object even to drawers being visible.

A. Well, Sir, that really is a canon of the British Board—undue exhibition of ladies’ underlinen.

Q. Have you seen the “Black Bottom Review”?

A. No Sir, I have not had the opportunity. In some cases we allow it but in this case it went a little too far.

Q. I want to know about “The Triumph of the Rat”. What are the objectionable portions?

A. In regard to “The Triumph of the Rat” I was away in England on leave when the film was banned, so I have no personal knowledge of what happened at the time.

Q. But have you got any notes about it?

Mr. Green: Have you got the Inspector’s report on it?

Mr. Neogy: Who acted for you at the time?

A. I will read out the two reports asked for by the Committee. The Inspector’s Report was as follows:—

I examined the following film yesterday morning:—

The Triumph of the Rat—Graham Cutts—length 8,425 feet.

This film has been passed by the British Board for public exhibition, and is a sequel to the film called “The Rat” which with a few excisions was certified in Calcutta in November last.

Like “The Rat” it is well produced and extremely well acted but the sordid scenes of the “underworld” of Paris, particularly in the Apache den known as the “White Coffin”, where incidents of a degrading nature, such as girls clamouring for drinks, and being pulled and kicked about by men, as also the stabbing scene in the final act, seem much too prolonged and

tends to mar the picture. A shortening of these scenes, particularly the stabbing, where Pierre Boucheron (The Rat) a physical wreck is engaged in a struggle for life with the bully of the den, who tries to stab him seems essential, but before making any excisions I would like a sub-committee or at least one member to view the film.

The Globe Theatre management are anxious to show the film to-morrow at their theatre and have already advertised it, so if possible, the sub-committee or a member might examine it to-day.

(Sd.) E. A. HARTLEY.

29th April 1927.

The Sub-Committee's Report was as follows:—

A sub-committee consisting of Mr. Murray Webb and the President examined the film "The Triumph of the Rat"—Graham Cutts—length 8,425 feet, on the evening of the 29th of April, in view of the remarks made by the Inspector in his Note No. 1553.

The film is a sequel to the film called "The Rat" which with certain excisions, was certified in Calcutta in November last. It will be recollected that one member of the Board was of opinion that "The Rat" is a type which should not be imported into India, in particular because it tended to shew the European womanhood in a degrading light; another member of the Board found it difficult to give an opinion on this film, as the subject was sordid and dealt entirely with the under-world of Paris. "The Triumph of the Rat" deals with the further adventures of Pierre Boucheron—he has been put on his feet in society in Paris through the good offices of his mistress who has obtained funds for the purpose from an elderly man who is infatuated with her. The "Rat" falls in love with a young girl of a noble family, when his mistress finds this out she becomes violently jealous and failing to detach the "Rat" from the girl whom he loves and to whom he is about to become engaged, she decides to ruin him. She cuts off his funds and employs a private detective to shadow him and to prevent him getting any employment; Pierre Boucheron gradually falls lower and lower in the social scale—he is shewn hanging round Restaurants, picking up bones, etc., and revisiting the Apache den known as the "White Coffin." Some of his former companions in the Apache den are planning a robbery, but when their plans are complete, they find that the police have forestalled them. The "Rat" is denounced as a spy and is attacked in the Apache den by one of the crooks who stabs him but not seriously. The play ends somewhat unconvincingly with the departure of the "Rat" from the "White Coffin" after this attack on him.

The whole theme of the play is immorality and crime both in the upper world and in the under world of Paris. There is no moral left to be drawn from the play, nor is there even an excuse that in the end virtue triumphs over vice—the whole play is frankly sordid. A description of some of the worst features of the play will illustrate this statement:—

In part II scenes are shewn in the cabaret where a man drags a girl down and fights with her. Madame Chaumet is shewn very scantily clad on a sofa talking to the "Rat".

In Part III some lowdown cabaret scenes are shewn, women smoking pipes and dancing—a bar scene where men and women are crowded round the bar fighting for drinks and jostling each other; the "Rat" is being shewn as kissed by two girls, a Negro quarrelling with a white girl, who shakes him by the throat.

In Part IV there is a love making scene between the "Rat" and his intended fiancée on a sofa and the final closing scene on a bench and swing which border on indecency.

In Part VI a scene is shewn where a robbery is being planned in the cabaret by 4 crooks—a close-up view is shewn of the chief villain, a very

repulsive individual, who is seized by the "Rat" and has his face rubbed in dirt on the table.

In Part VII there are more cabaret dancing and drinking scenes.

Part VIII—fondling and kissing scenes between the "Rat" and his mistress—more cabaret scenes in which a Negro is shewn in collision with a white dwarf; there is an attack on a girl in the cabaret by the chief crook; an attempt to stab the "Rat" by this crook, which is shewn close-up and with great realism. There is another close-up view of the girls and men in the cabaret, which seems to be totally unnecessary for the plot or the play and is certainly not a pleasing picture.

The play has been passed like its predecessor by the British Board for public exhibition and not for universal exhibition, the inference being that the British Board did not consider it a suitable play for boys and girls of tender years. This is certainly a type of film which may be tolerable in one country and quite unsuitable in another and it certainly falls within the purview of pictures which the Bengal Board have circularised the principal Cinema Managers in Calcutta, as undesirable for exhibition in British India. As early as 1920 and since that on other occasions the Bengal Board have stated that films dealing with prostitution, scenes shewing women in a drunken state, exaggerated scenes of debauchery in cabarets and saloons, are not suitable for exhibition here. We asked Mr. Laharry, the Manager of the Globe, whether he personally considered the picture a suitable one for exhibition and whether he could point to any relieving features in the picture—his answer was that the Bengal Board had passed the "Rat", a similar type of picture and he could not see therefore why exception should be taken to the sequel. The reply is that the sequel is much worse than the "Rat".

It will be seen from what has been said above that the Board were doubtful about the "Rat"—the importers were given the benefit of the doubt on that occasion with the result that this leniency is sought to be used as a lever to force the hands of the Board in other pictures of this type. Mr. Laharry has seen me again since the above was written. He says, and I accept his statement, that he did not intend to try and force the Board's hands by this argument but wished to justify his importation of the film. We are of opinion that this film is unsuitable for public exhibition in Bengal on account of its low moral tone and its portrayal of the degradation of European men and women.

(Sd.) C. A. TEGART.

30th April 1927.

I have nothing further to add as I consider the President has fully described the objectionable features.

In my opinion the film is quite unsuitable for exhibition here.

(Sd.) G. H. WEBB.

1st May 1927.

Q. You have seen "The Rat"?

A. Yes. But in "The Rat" there was a moral which apparently was not found in "The Triumph of the Rat".

Q. You have seen "The Triumph of the Rat"?

A. No.

Q. You know they have elicited universal applause, both of them?

A. Yes, but in England they were banned for children. Here we have not got the situation where children and adolescents are prevented from viewing certain films. That is a very important point.

Q. They are banned for adolescents there?

A. No. But the question of adolescents of course arises from a different stand-point. In India the stand-point of the degradation of white women.

**Q.** Many of the scenes objected to in "The Triumph of the Rat" appeared in "The Rat" also.

**A.** I have not seen "The Triumph of the Rat" and I cannot say.

**Q.** What do you think of the film "Variety" which you have recently censored.

**A.** I held that the film offended against the following canons of censorship:—

- (1) Impropriety of conduct and dress.
- (2) Indecorous dancing.
- (3) The nude.
- (4) Crime in which the sympathy of the audience is enlisted for the criminal.
- (5) Criminal assault.
- (6) A story which accentuates the irregular relations of the sexes.
- (7) Immoral relationships.
- (8) Unbridled and illicit passion.
- (9) Suggestive amorous advances.

There is another film called "Variety", and it shows the thoroughness of the Germans. They had in reserve a modified edition of this very film. The U. F. A. people had this modified edition ready, in case the censors banned the first one. The length of the original film was 7,957 feet and the modified film is one of 5,245 feet, with the same name and the same characters.

**Q.** You are not sure whether it was passed by the British Board?

**A.** Pictures which are passed by the British Board usually have a certificate of that Board on the film. This had none.

**Q.** It was released. I find from some of the papers in England, as early as 1926.

**A.** I am almost sure it was the modified edition which was released in England.

**Q.** But the story is the same?

**A.** No. I would like to read you some of the extracts from American papers with regard to the first edition of the film. They say what the film is.

**Q.** The Americans are jealous?

**A.** They are selling it. The Paramount people are selling it and the advertisements are with a view to attract buyers and the general public, not to "down" the film.

The New York Graphic, dated 28th June, 1926, refers to the heroine Lya de Putti as "a woman who takes love where she finds it and is always on the look out. Care-free, reckless, primitive and never in the least inhibited, the character will undoubtedly be received as a daring departure from the ramps our wandering eyes have been accustomed to accept in this country".

The New York World of the same date says "Variety is a picture the theme of which is almost continuously one of sex lure, and as such no flowered screens obstruct the view, *no silly censorship deletes that fleeting clasp of Boss's big hand as it falls heavily and quite immodestly upon the white leg of his dancing girl.* This is all true stuff . . . its direction sets it definitely in that little group of selected screen plays which we may refer to as being adult".

The New York Sun of the same date described the picture as "a dramatic, searing and ironic melodrama of life and love among a quartet of muscular acrobats, its adulthood and power . . . cause to seem disgustingly infantile the sugar-coated fodder sent out from Hollywood in the last ten years . . . None of your machine-made plots is Variety, but a simple fully developed slice of crude, raw, quivering life".

**Q.** Don't you think it should be passed for super-excellence with certain excisions?

**A.** Yes. The excisions have been provided in the modified edition. When the first one was banned they showed a modified edition. In the modified edition the first three parts are omitted and they start where they become man and wife. In the modified edition the girl is the wife and not the mistress which made a world of difference to the film.

**Q.** But it is a superb, fine production?

**A.** It was. The photography was wonderful. You see even the producers had extreme doubt in regard to the first edition and so they provided themselves with a modified edition to sell in case the first was banned.

**Q.** It was bordering on the obscene in some parts, but still on account of its excellence, with those things omitted, it might be passed for the fitness of it.

**A.** We have often reconstructed pictures for producers to save the picture. In this case the producers themselves saved us that trouble.

**Mr. Green:** I understood you to say that the view of your Board is that a film should not be used for propaganda of any sort?

**A.** I refer specially to revolutionary propaganda.

**Q.** I take it, other forms of propaganda too, for instance, religious propaganda? I would suggest a parallel. Indian broad-casting is subject to certain checks. Could you compare them? Both have a very wide appeal?

**A.** I do not think I can compare them. I think a picture has undoubtedly more grip on the mind than mere word of mouth.

**Q.** If it is necessary that there should be no propaganda through broad-casting you hold it is more important that films should not be so used?

**A.** Yes. Certainly, propaganda of an objectionable type.

**Q.** Only one other question. In your list we see many excisions and we saw the same in the Bombay list. I gather you said that you sometimes suggest excisions. Do you mean, to the exhibitor, or you suggest to the Board?

**A.** I suggest to the Board always and my reports are to the Board. But I try and get the exhibitor to agree with me.

**Q.** Does your report to the Board sometimes indicate "I have suggested this to which the exhibitor has agreed"?

**A.** Yes, and this happens very often.

**Q.** I would like to thank you for the great trouble you have taken in giving us so much detail.

**Col. Crawford:** Just one question about the film, "The Birth of a Nation". Is not the part of the Negro Parliament actual fiction?

**A.** Yes, it must be, but I won't be positive on the point.

**Q.** It seemed to me that this film was anti-colour race propaganda on behalf of the American?

**A.** Yes, undoubtedly, but whether based on actual fiction or not I don't know.

**Mr. Neogy:** I want information about "the Orphans of the Storm" and "the Car Festival of Moresh".

**A.** In regard to the film "Orphans of the Storm", I may briefly state the position.

The film was passed in Bombay and came to Calcutta in January, 1924. It was one of the most realistic productions relating to the French Revolution I have seen. There were numerous inflammatory references (and scenes complimentary to them) like—"Ages of oppression"—"First combat between the King's soldiers and revolutionaries", "the people triumphant" "vengeance on our former masters", "the downfall of Royalty and the end of tyranny". A sub-title which purported to say that kingship represented the old feudal rights of tyranny. Scenes of mob violence were many. When

most of these sub-titles and scenes appeared, they were followed by demonstrations on the part of the audience consisting very largely of Indians. Similar demonstrations, in this case one of derision, met scenes like—"pouring boiling-lead into a man's veins"—alleged to have been practiced by the Police; a loud demonstration of approval when the Police joined hands with the Revolutionaries.

The film was one which was capable of being interpreted and misused for revolutionary propaganda.

In addition to the above there were one or two scenes of debauchery (fortunately short), *e.g.*, women swimming in vats of wine, the wine being afterwards drunk by the on-lookers; also particularly disgusting scenes of demi-mondaines.

The film was banned under the orders of the Local Government.

Q. A sub-committee saw the film?

A. I think so. The film was banned by the orders of the Local Government on a reference by our Board. It bore a Bombay Board's certificate.

Q. What about "The Car Festival"?

A. In regard to films portraying processions like the Rathjatra festival and others of a similar character, I may say generally that, so far as the censor is concerned, they are dealt with like any other film, *i.e.*, mainly from the point of view whether there is anything indecent in them or anything likely to offend the religious susceptibilities of any community. If the film is free from such scenes, the censors are prepared to issue certificates. At the same time the attention of the Police authorities is drawn to cases where such scenes are likely to cause communal friction and a breach of the peace is apprehended thereby. In such cases, the order for rejection of the picture comes ordinarily not from the censors but the Police.

Dealing particularly with the film of the "Rathjatra Festival", I may state as follows:—

The film was produced before the Inspector of Films by Messrs. Madan and Company, on the 16th February 1926, for examination.

The Inspector reported that there was no objection to the picture and recommended it for certification. He, however, added that owing to the Muharram Festival, it might be suggested to the producers to postpone the exhibition of the film for a week, *i.e.*, after the excitement over the Muharram had subsided.

On the 19th or 20th July there was a recrudescence of trouble between the Hindus and Muhammadans in Calcutta and the suggestion was made that the exhibition of the picture should be postponed to calmer times.

The Board at their meeting thereupon postponed the issue of a certificate for six months.

In the meantime the producers themselves withdrew their application for a certificate.

Below is a list of films which we have passed of this character in the period 1925-27:—

- (1) Chinese Topical—showing Dr. Sun Yat Sen inspecting Republican Volunteers in China.
- (2) Sradh Ceremony of the late Mr. C. R. Das (one edition by Madans and one by the Aurora Co.).
- (3) Mohurrum Procession in Calcutta.
- (4) Mohurrum Procession in Luncknow.

Films which have been prohibited are—

- (1) The great Sikh Procession.
- (2) The Calcutta Sikh Procession.

In both these cases the Commissioner of Police prohibited the films as likely to cause communal friction.

Q. That was a mere reproduction of a particular Hindu festival and how could that incite the Muhammadans?

A. There is a slight point. The police arrangements with regard to the Sikh procession were tremendous and the procession passed without friction. If in every cinema, you were to show processions of this character in which you know there is fear of trouble, you would be bound to take precautions.

Q. Do you mean to say that the very sight of the Car Festival which takes place, say, in Puri, will incite the Muhammadans?

A. I cannot say it would, but I can give you the case of Muhammadans taking objection to a scene in "The Ten Commandments" where Moses was beaten by Pharaoh's son. We have to take note of objections like that where religious susceptibilities are likely to be aroused.

Q. When were the films relating to the Mohurram procession exhibited? I want to satisfy myself that there was no trouble in those days?

A. I cannot tell you exactly when they were exhibited. I could say when the certificate was issued. Madans would be able to tell you definitely the dates on which they were exhibited.

**\*Oral Evidence of Mr. M. BOSE, on Thursday, the 22nd December 1927.**

To Chairman: I was connected with the production of "The Light of Asia", along with Mr. Niranjana Pal, Mr. Roy and Mr. M. L. Mhanar.

Q. Were you connected with the business aspect of it also?

A. I was connected with the business for some time in Germany and Austria.

Q. With reference to "The Light of Asia"?

A. Yes.

Q. You had a proprietary interest in it?

A. Not proprietary, but I had something to do with it.

Q. Were you in England when the film was exhibited there?

A. Yes.

Q. Where was it exhibited?

A. It was shown at the Philharmonic Hall, and it was shown also by Royal Command at Windsor Palace.

Q. It was after it was exhibited at Windsor Palace that it was exhibited in that Hall?

A. No. While it was being shown in the Hall it was also taken to Windsor Palace.

Q. Had exhibition by Royal Command any influence on the increase of attendance?

A. Not so far as the box office went.

Q. What was the nature of the attendance at "The Light of Asia" in England?

A. It was not very satisfactory. Of course, the hall was taken at a high price, and, as you know, it is out of the way and it is not usually an amusement theatre.

Q. Why did they select such a place? Why did you not go into the fashionable quarters?

A. We had to take the hall ourselves and we could not get any other hall.



Q. Why did you not try by means of the exhibitors?

A. We could not get the renters to take it up.

Q. They would not look at it?

A. Not that year, they said they were fully booked up that year.

Q. And so you had to make arrangements yourself and that was the only hall we could get at that time?

A. Yes.

Q. And was it a financial success there?

A. In London? No.

Q. Was it a financial success anywhere in Europe?

A. In Germany it was a financial success.

Q. The usual exhibitors took it?

A. Yes, they took it in many places. Exhibitors who ordinarily were renters.

Q. They took up the show?

A. Yes. Here we managed it ourselves.

Q. But did they try again to exhibit in England?

A. No, not after that.

Q. Why not? What has happened to that film now?

A. They said they were fully booked up. It was shown in Italy, in Austria, and in Germany, Yugo Slavia. It has not yet been shown in France. They are trying to show it there. In England we did not get the rights for the provinces, only for London.

Q. The rights belong to America?

A. To Amelca, a German Company. And the German company sold it to America.

Q. Then why did you not get a market?

A. But in England we only had the right to show in London.

Q. What do you mean by "the right"?

A. The film does not belong to us.

Q. Only certain rights were secured to you?

A. Yes. It was produced by a German company and it was financed partly by Indians. We were actors.

Q. You had a share in the bargain. The Indian promoters' share was the right to show it only in London? The right to show it elsewhere belongs to the German firm which produced it?

A. Yes, and since they did not find it a profitable business in London, they did not take it up later. When we wanted it for the provinces they would not give it to us because it was not profitable in London.

Q. So there it stands and you don't know whether it was a profitable concern to the producers?

A. No.

Q. In the place where it was shown, how long did it run?—in London. We were told you took the hall for a certain period and therefore it was shown for a particular period.

A. It is not for that. It ran for five months. About 4½ months it was being shown.

Q. Did it pay its way?

A. It paid the rent of the hall.

Mr. Green: Although the rent was very high?

A. Yes. It was very high, it paid the rent. There was no profit. I think there was a little loss.

Q. Can you tell us approximately what the box office receipts were?

A. Well, the rent of the hall was about £200 a week. It just paid its way for the rental and the upkeep. There was a little loss I hear. I cannot say for certain as I was not in the business part of it there.

*Chairman:* Anyway it ran for 4½ months. Was there a very good audience?

A. No, not much.

Q. Take for instance a third class show in western films.

A. You see that is a hall for select audience, not for the masses, and the prices are very high.

Q. So that would not attract the ordinary crowd?

A. No.

Q. Then it has not been tried in London or England really, I mean for the mass of the people. Unless it is shown in a popular house, you cannot form an opinion.

A. Of course, the press reports were very good.

*Mr. Green:* You told us the rent of the hall was £200 a week, and it ran for 4½ months, and you paid your way. That means that the takings were in the nature of £4,000 altogether. Have you any idea what it cost to produce the film?

A. A lakh and a half.

Q. That return was from one house?

A. There was no return.

Q. I mean the money you made. My only point is that, had they been able to get the rights for the whole of England, they might have made a profit. I am agreeably surprised to find they made so much. Did they say that the other theatres were fully booked up?

A. That is what the renters said.

Q. The renters presumably were trying to get their own stuff shown.

*Chairman:* Do you think they had been block-booking?

A. Some of them said it was too heavy, some that it was too much of a risk.

Q. If it had been an attractive film, they might have taken it.

A. Some of them said it was too heavy.

*Col. Crawford:* What is your opinion of the film for box office purposes. Do you think it would draw a crowd in England?

A. I don't think so. Because in most of the places in Germany what I found on the continent—apart from Berlin and such places—was that people knew nothing about India. For instance a thing like an elephant probably they have never seen or anything like that. England knows more about India than some parts of the continent.

Q. You think your continental audiences were drawn by curiosity more?

A. Yes, because our acting was not up to the standard. It could not be.

Q. There were not enough sensational incidents for a mass audience in the film?

A. There were two spectacular scenes.

Q. But not sensational scenes?

A. No.

Q. It is not a film that would ever appeal to mass audiences desiring adventure and excitement?

A. Either it will appeal to the sentiment of the people or for spectacular reasons. Most of the remarks I heard and saw in the press were in relation to its spectacular scenes. Elephants, etc.

Q. It is a picture appealing more to cultured people than to the masses?

A. Yes.

*Mr. Neogy:* Was there any trade exhibition of the film in England before you publicly exhibited it?

A. Yes.

Q. And did all the important showmen care to come?

A. They were invited, including all the press.

Q. Was that procedure followed also on the continent?

A. Yes, everywhere on the continent.

Q. Now, we were told that the reason why you ran the film for such a time in London was that you had taken the hall for that particular period and you had to run it for that period whether you made any money or not?

A. I could not tell you, because at that time I was working in a different studio in Germany. I was not connected with it.

Q. What were the press notices you got on the continent?

A. Very good.

Q. In England?

A. In England also.

Q. What was the trade verdict?

A. The trade verdict depended on the press. The press gave a good report.

Q. And it is after the trade show that you came to know as to which party was willing to show it and which not.

A. No. We tried the renters before fixing on our hall, nearly all the renters of London.

Q. But how could they know about your film before you actually showed it?

A. The film was with us. We showed the film to the renters.

Q. To individual renters separately?

A. Yes.

Q. And what is your experience about America?

A. I don't know. I haven't been there.

*Col. Crawford:* Did I understand you to say that you had been employed in a studio in Germany?

A. Yes.

Q. In what capacity?

A. As a camera man.

Q. Did you have any difficulty in getting your training there?

A. No, because I went to some company.

Q. Now, if we suggested that young men from India should visit Germany in order to get a training, would they have any trade difficulties?

A. Well, they would not take you unless you had influence.

Q. Would the language be a difficulty, or not?

A. The language would be a difficulty, but that wouldn't stand in the way. It is a matter of a couple of months. But for a student to go there by himself, he would have no opportunity at all. He would have to go into some company who would take him.

### **Written Statement of Mr. H. C. MUKHERJI, Journalist.**

1. Although I am a journalist, I am also connected with Messrs. Madan Theatres, Ltd., mostly on Advertising and Exploitation side. I mention this as I received the Committee's letter in my capacity of a Journalist.

I should like to be as brief as possible as I do not desire to take up your time unnecessarily. My principal subjects for evidence are (1) Amusement Tax, (2) Customs duty, (3) Monopoly, (4) Censorship, (5) Foreign films and (6) Indian films.

To begin with the Amusement Tax, there is no doubt that this Tax is handicapping the Exhibitor. The hardship of this tax is felt not so much by the person patronising cinemas alone as by the man with a family. Where he could buy the children chocolates, lemonades, etc., before, he can only pay for tickets, owing to the imposition of the tax. The exhibitor naturally is getting less income from two sources, viz.:—Sale of Tickets and Sale of sweets, etc. A man with a family cannot afford owing to the existence of the tax to patronise cinemas as many times in the month as he could before the tax was imposed. The abolition of the tax is not only necessary but also fair and equitable alike to the exhibitor and the General Public.

Coming to the question of Customs Duty, when this was first imposed, it was at the rate of 5 per cent. on the cost of the film. Later it was raised to  $7\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. on the cost of the film. Now it is 15 per cent. or four annas a foot on the entire footage. This comes to Rs. 37-8-0 per reel of 1,000 feet. Raw film stock both Negative and Positive is charged 15 per cent. on the Invoice cost. Those who import second hand films sometimes buy at the rate of Rs. 10 per reel and pay a duty of Rs. 37-8-0 which is absurd. Buyers of first hand films are better off in this respect that they pay a high price for their purchase. It is imperative that this Tariff anomaly should be removed as far as possible.

Not only do negative and positive films (raw) pay 15 per cent. *ad valorem* duty, but coloured posters and indeed all the literature relative to the film imported also pay 15 per cent. *ad valorem* duty. This is absolutely unjustifiable.

Indian negatives printed outside India re-enter India after paying 15 per cent. *ad valorem* duty.

*Re* the question of monopoly enjoyed by any Company both in the matter of film purchase in foreign countries and cinemas in India, this is only a myth as according to the correct definition of the word, "monopoly" is "the sole power of vending". The question therefore is whether any company has the sole power of vending both as regards purchasing films and running cinemas. I do not think such is the case. Monopoly concerns exist in Calcutta and other large cities in the shape of the Electric Supply Companies, the Gas Companies, The Tramways Companies, etc. There are several companies in India both importing and as well as exhibiting films. Hence no monopoly exists.

The question of censorship is perhaps the most complicated of all. As it stands, censorship is strict enough as American films imported first pass The National Board of Review and then receive in the majority of the cases the certificate of the British Board of Censors in London before they come out of India. Here it undergoes examination by the local censor, and sometimes cuts are needlessly made. Even absolutely harmless comics have portions cut out. It is rather strange that while well known classics of fiction or stage successes remain untouched, cinema versions of those very things are ruthlessly censored.

Not only films passed by one board are refused certification by another board, although under the Indian Cinematograph Act, films once passed by one board are fit for universal exhibition all over British India, but it also happens that films duly passed and certified by the Board are stopped after a few days' exhibition on the report of some member of the public or other.

The film censor does not appear at times to distinguish between Art and Vulgarity. While on the stage dancing is permitted in the flimsiest costume, on the screen exception is taken to even tableaux in dancing costume.

Too much is also made sometime of the sex question, also of threatened loss of prestige enjoyed by the white race in the eyes of the Indian audience. I do not think anything has yet been shown on the screen which can beat modern dancing costume or modern women's evening dresses or scenes in open cars seen in the streets. Educated people go to cinemas to amuse themselves and look upon cinema shows as nothing but entertainment and experience the same feelings as by reading novels.

Illiterate people do not want to see Western Social dramas in which they never feel interested. They prefer by far serials in which there is plenty of running about, etc., and Indian films which they can follow easily.

There has recently been an out-cry that more British films should be exhibited. The showman must look to his Box Office and any stuff that will give him good results will be chosen by him, no matter whether it is British, American, German, French, Italian, etc. In these days of super-films only those showmen who get the goods will survive.

Indian films are daily coming into prominence and with facilities, lacking at present, being supplied will become more popular. Companies producing Indian films find that the exhibition of their pictures is well appreciated by the public—the Indian public showing a greater liking for these pictures. With improvement in technique, the quality of Indian films, as medium of entertainment, is bound to appeal to a larger audience. Government assistance, in certain directions, and not interference, is what this infant Industry requires. To sum up, it should not be forgotten that the cinema industry, in all its aspects, is yet a stripling, and if too many restrictions are placed on it, it will have no chance of developing. Whether films exhibited are of Indian, British, American, German, French or Italian origin, it has to be borne in mind that producers, distributors and exhibitors will not risk their good name by presenting anything which is inherently immoral, for if they do so, they will find themselves left severely alone. The charge of "low moral tone" brought against certain films is a vague one and is, by far, the most dangerous charge one has to guard against. I venture the opinion that in many cases, the "low moral tone" belongs not to the film itself but to the mind of the censor, and this can be cured by only taking the trade into the confidence of the Censor Board, for the trade alone can explain things clearly. One great fact must not be overlooked in this connection, namely, that if one sits down with the express purpose of finding fault with a film, some scene or sub-title must be found unsuitable. It is, however, not in this spirit, which is otherwise known as the spirit of Nil Admirari, that any film, or for that matter, any human being is to be judged, and that in a progressive world, which is banning prudery and becoming more and more plain spoken, straightforward and broadminded, it is essential for the advancement of mankind that those charged with the supervision of entertainment should march with the times and try to be as broadminded as possible, due regard being had to the existing law of the land.

### **Oral Evidence of Mr. H. C. MUKHERJI, Journalist, Amalgamated Newspapers, Ltd., on Thursday, the 22nd December 1927.**

*Chairman:* We want your opinion on the question as to what should be done to encourage the growth of Indian films.

A. Well, personally, I think that we want a lot of improvement in technique. Now, we are, it is true, directing pictures but we ourselves do not know what real direction is. Our experience has been mostly from watching films and we try to pick up points here and there and that is all our experience. Very few of us have been to foreign countries to learn. So I think a Director from abroad might be useful in telling us exactly how to direct. The talent is here: it is only guidance we want.

**Q.** So you would import a director from abroad to train the directors here?

**A.** We hear a lot about actors and actresses. It is true that actors and actresses who have so far appeared in Indian pictures have not done so very well. By that I don't mean there is no talent in this country. There may be one thousand Jackie Coogans or one thousand Charlie Chaplins, but at the same time we have not picked out the real men and women yet. It is far easier to find the men than the women, because in practically all cases, the women are drawn either from the stage or have had no experience at all and their education is practically *nil*. Now, in England or America you ask any actor or actress to say something about Shakespeare or any other person who has written dramas. Here the very actors or actresses who are playing important parts are hardly equal to the task.

**Q.** They don't know who Bankim Chandra Chatterji is?

**A.** They know, but they cannot express any opinion on his merits as a writer, as to what his characters represent and so forth. Among men also, education has been badly lacking in the past. Fortunately now educated people are coming forward. In Calcutta, for instance, you have a number of educated Bengalis on the stage. They have improved the tone of the stage and some of these very people are appearing in pictures. So it is not so much trouble with them. The acting by the women requires a lot of improvement.

**Q.** Now, therefore, what do you suggest?

**A.** That is very hard to say, because it is really a question of psychology. You cannot tell a person how to express feeling. Now we are all sitting here for example. We are all absolutely natural in our talk and movement and everything. But the moment a camera is clicking in the room we all get hard and rigid. That is the trouble. Now Jackie Coogan for example has been called the world's most wonderful child because he does not care what others are doing around him. He simply goes on with his work as if that was all that mattered in the world. That is really the secret of his success.

**Q.** I understand that, but what is your suggestion?

**A.** Well, it is very difficult. Education is really at the root.

**Q.** You want a vocational class?

**A.** Well, I would suggest personally, if I had anything to do with the matter, I would suggest the opening of cinema schools and the University might help by including the cinema in the curriculum of studies for examination. The same as is done in the Universities in America and England. If everybody is properly educated this difficulty will be overcome.

**Q.** That is on the training side. Now on the business side?

**A.** On the business side, well we want more enterprise on the part of our capitalists. People have in the past put so much money in this business and failed that their example is remembered.

**Q.** Have they really failed or is it a case of lack of organisation. The business paid, whatever film they produced paid.

**A.** Well, the business failed for many reasons, because there has practically been no business run.

**Q.** On account of lack of organisation and business capacity, not because the business is not a paying concern?

**A.** Yes, as you can see by the large crowds that gather to see Indian pictures.

**Q.** So that it is really lack of business education and business training and organisation. Therefore you would advocate that there should be some training of people even in business. You have really no instruction in your school course.

**A.** I mean to say, people should not engage in business they know nothing about.

*Q.* We see the difficulty. But what is your suggestion? What do you think should be done in order to remove or minimise the difficulty?

*A.* Well it will come with experience. Take the case of Madans. They are the only successful people here.

*Q.* I quite see that. It is work that requires experience.

*A.* And their organisation too is sound. Fortunately they are business men. Every concern cannot be said to be run by business men. They are business men, and they are engaged not only in this line of business but also in other lines.

*Q.* But do you advocate banking facilities being secured for this business?

*A.* No.

*Q.* Such as long term loans or loans on easy terms?

*A.* Well, of course, that is really a matter for the companies themselves.

*Q.* Because we have heard complaints that there are no people to find the finance.

*Chairman:* I think an ordinary Indian drama of say 7 or 8 parts can be produced for Rs. 7,000 or Rs. 8,000, not more than that. Possibly for Rs. 5,000 or Rs. 6,000. Now, I have heard it said by certain people that their pictures have cost them Rs. 60,000 and a lakh of rupees and so on. I don't see where the money was spent.

*Q.* You don't think so much need have been spent?

*A.* No.

*Q.* Of course the original outfit would cost something?

*A.* Yes, that would, but the actual production much less.

*Q.* If you want really to produce a good film you must have dresses and so on.

*A.* Well, I have recently seen two films, "Sanckaracharya" and "Incarnation".

*Q.* That is the one you were concerned with?

*A.* No. Well, I was told by the producers that on "Incarnation" they spent about Rs. 65,000. But I really could not see where the money went. Because the film was mostly exterior and the scenes were shot in Rajputana, in Jaipur and other places, and the Maharajas were very kind and they placed everything at their disposal. The train fares and salaries of the people engaged and the dresses and other thing could not possibly have cost more than Rs. 15,000. At least that is my estimate. As a matter of fact, I don't think Madans spend very much more than that.

*Q.* Therefore your suggestion is that left to themselves they will be able to find the money?

*A.* Yes. People say money is tight. Money is tight, I admit, probably in Clive Street. But for film producing there is plenty.

*Q.* But still we don't find people coming forward. There is plenty of scope for producing at least 50 or 60 films a year, and hardly 6 are produced in a year.

*A.* That is because, apart from Madans, so many other people have failed.

*Q.* Therefore I do not understand your position.

*A.* I will tell you. I have been trying myself to find capitalists within the last five or six years but I have not found one; whilst others have been more successful, people who have come in later.

*Q.* You state the fact but you refuse to draw the conclusion. You say you find it difficult, you cannot induce people to put in money into it and yet when we say financial facilities are needed, you say, No.

*A.* There are people in Bengal who have plenty of money.

*Q.* But will they come forward? What should be done in order to induce them to come forward?

A. As soon as they find that in addition to Madans, other people are producing pictures and that those pictures are bringing in money, they will come in.

Q. Is there anything else you want to suggest in order to encourage the growth of the Indian film industry?

A. Well, there is nothing else except that we require Government assistance now and again.

Q. In what respect?

A. There may be certain scenes to be taken, which require the securing of Government permission.

Q. You want facilities, access to public places?

A. Public places and policemen and soldiers and so on.

Q. Supply of men and materials and easy access to places which are necessary for producing scenery and all that?

A. You know we cannot photograph a fort, for instance, either Fort William or the Agra Fort.

Q. For that matter do you think such facilities and assistance should be given only to people in India, an Indian Company?

A. Yes.

Q. And should not be given to all and sundry who come over from abroad?

A. Not just yet.

Q. We saw the other day in the "Bengalee" that a German firm has come out and that an American firm is coming out. Therefore you would advocate registration for that purpose at any rate?

A. Well, if you want to differentiate between respectable firms and others.

Q. Between Indian and non-Indian. Even among Indians?

A. There must be a certain guarantee of *bona fides*. And as the Indian film industry is so young yet, I do not think we should allow any foreign producer to come here yet.

Q. To have free access?

A. Yes. Now if they want they can do anything here.

Q. They are now "shooting" all over the place and they take away the negatives which are full of value and the country gets no return for it?

A. Yes.

Mr. Green: You made a few remarks about tariff. You talk about it being possible to obtain a parcel of films for Rs. 10, on which a duty of 37/8 has to be paid. If that is for a thousand feet, it must be extremely cheap stuff?

A. Yes. But you know there are lots of people in India, in Calcutta, I know two or three small people who import second-hand films. Now sometimes they obtain educational films for Rs. 5 and they are paying Rs. 37-8 duty on them.

Q. But apart from educational stuff, if it cost as little as that, must it not be what is known as "junk"?

A. Yes.

Q. Isn't it a good thing to keep out such bad stuff?

A. That bad thing must come.

Q. But why? Isn't it competing with Indian films? You want to encourage the Indian industry. If you are going to allow that thing to come in on *ad valorem* duty or no duty at all, your Indian houses will be able to get that cheap stuff instead of paying for Indian films.

A. Well I don't really call them houses. They are mostly brought out by people who have tent shows, travelling shows.



**Q.** Can't travelling shows supply a market for Indian films? Then you talk about monopolies, such as the electric light supply company and others are monopolies, they of course are public utility companies; and as a corollary of that they have no small measure of a state or municipal control.

**A.** Yes.

**Chairman:** I suppose you would call Ralli Bros. a monopoly?

**A.** In some respects.

**Mr. Green:** I am not saying there is a monopoly of the film industry in India, but if there were a monopoly, do you think it ought to be controlled in the same way as other public utility companies?

**A.** Yes, certainly, because it is of public importance.

**Col. Crawford:** I notice just one point you made namely, that the effect of the theatre and the novel and the film are the same.

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Now the presentation of an actual act on the film is infinitely more exaggerated than it is on the stage? It has to be for purposes of clarity.

**A.** Well, I would not call that exaggeration exactly.

**Q.** Take a dancing scene on the stage. You see a scene on the stage, but on the screen you see it enlarged to 12 feet. It is a different proposition, isn't it?

**A.** Well probably it is an enlarged representation, that is all. It is really the same thing shown under a magnifying glass.

**Q.** But you don't think it can possibly be more objectionable on this ground?

**A.** No.

**Q.** You are entirely satisfied with the story as shown on the films to-day?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** You would not agree that the producer draws unduly on the low side of life?

**A.** No, because the producer is following the story of some well-known author.

**Q.** Not always.

**A.** But in the majority of cases the films are adaptations only. Very few films have yet been made from stories which are actually made for the purposes of film acting.

**Mr. Neogy:** Are you talking of Indian films?

**A.** Of all films.

**Col. Crawford:** Then you are quite satisfied with the standard of film as it is to-day?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** You are a journalist. Now do you think the press could assist in maintaining the standard of films shown?

**A.** Certainly.

**Q.** In what way? By free criticism?

**A.** If there is a tendency in any picture to lower the standard, the press can at once write: such and such a film is not good.

**Q.** You think they will write?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Because we have had it stated that the press is not very independent in this matter.

**A.** What takes place generally is that for ordinary films the press do not even care to send down a representative. Indeed the reviews which appear

sometimes are sent in by the exhibitor. The "Statesman" is about the only paper that cuts it down. The other papers having more space, sometimes it appears as it is sent in.

*Q.* The advertising revenue does not tie their hands?

*A.* It does in a way for small papers. But the "Statesman" does not care a jot. Sometimes when Madans have taken a full page they have only received three lines. They have kicked up a row, they have written in and brought it to their notice.

*Chairman:* Anyway you are not speaking for the newspaper now. Because you are giving us inside information which I do not want to go in unless it comes from the proper source.

*Col. Crawford:* You also think that the censorship as it is to-day is too strict?

*A.* Yes. If you are to judge by the number of films that have been banned in the course of a year perhaps you will say that the censorship is not strict, but you can never know how many times the exhibitor has been asked to take out sub-titles or scenes. Those really do not come within your knowledge.

*Mr. Green:* They do. It is on record.

*A.* Even then there are films from which the censor says, "You take out these scenes". But it is not mentioned in his report.

*Chairman:* By mutual arrangement?

*A.* Yes.

*Mr. Neogy:* With regard to the shyness of capital, may it be that this is due partly to the uncertainty which the capitalists feel about the future of the industry? They perhaps do not consider this to be a regular line of business yet?

*A.* I think we have either got over that stage or are getting over it.

*Q.* Do you think that if the Government were to make a definite declaration of their policy in regard to the protection of this industry and were to give an assurance against unequal foreign competition, capital would be encouraged to come forward?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* And from that point of view you support this suggestion?

*A.* Yes.

*Chairman:* If preference for Indian things were shown by Government, that would induce capital to come in?

*A.* Yes. You know people are always suspicious whatever Government may do. I do not know why. That is inherent.

*Mr. Green:* You do not want Government assistance in case . . .

*A.* We do require.

*Chairman:* At the same time it gives respectability if the Government helps. (Laughter).

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**Oral Evidence of Lieutenant-Colonel H. A. J. GIDNEY, M.L.A., J.P., I.M.S. (Retd.), President-in-Chief, Anglo-Indian and Domiciled European Association, All-India and Burma, on Friday, the 23rd December 1927.**

*Chairman:* There is only one matter on which I should like to trouble you, and that is what effect the cinema has on your community.

*A.* I have never looked upon it as creating any communal impression. I do not know whether it has any different effect on my community. I do not think western films have any prejudicial effect on the Anglo-Indian community, as compared with uneducated Indians who might misconstrue certain things.

*Q.* We have heard a lot about it, that is more or less guess work. You have no definite evidence about that?

*A.* But it does tend to influence one's outlook on life.

*Q.* For better or for worse?

*A.* That depends much on the film shown. I think films that border on the indecent or that are indecently suggestive certainly do affect the present generation. They are not quite so stable as were their forefathers. Such things appeal to the present generation more but I do not think it has any very particular communal effect.

*Q.* We have heard a lot about the effect of the cinema on the uneducated classes. But the evidence is that these social dramas which depict social life are not at all popular with the illiterate classes, but they like rather serials and action films and Indian films more than social dramas where indecency if at all appears. It is more on the youths and the adolescents that this class of cinemas is said to have effect.

*A.* I have been to a good few cinemas, especially in Calcutta, and, judging from the response of the audience, *e.g.*, clapping, to anything that borders on the indecent,—that is if you take applause as any indicator of their mind,—it does certainly elicit tremendous reaction, and when there is anything suggestive there is often a sort of hushed silence and suppressed ecstasy over the suggestion.

*Q.* Is it not a safety valve, is it not a safe outlet?

*A.* I could not answer that.

*Q.* Otherwise they might be enjoying that hour somewhere else?

*A.* Possibly.

*Mr. Green:* We were told by a medical witness yesterday that he regarded a little immorality on the films as a safety valve.

*A.* No, I do not think it is.

*Chairman:* Do you think these things which you see on the screen have any lasting effect?

*A.* I do think really that all these suggestive films do have an effect on the mind, especially the uneducated Eastern mind, and anything but a nice effect.

*Q.* For instance, I was particularly struck with the exhibition of modern modes of dress on the screen for the purpose of advertisement. I was wondering whether it does not encourage ideas of extravagance among poor Anglo-Indians?

*A.* There is no doubt about it I personally think it does tend to have that effect though it may be transient.

*Q.* We cannot stop it on that account?

*A.* I do not think so. I should say it has a good effect and a bad effect.

*Q.* You admit I suppose that a certain amount of exaggeration is needed; the ordinary humdrum life would not be attractive on the screen and you would have some romance if you want to make the film attractive.

*A.* Yes, I quite agree with you.

*Q.* And some kind of emphasis on that side of life is needed in that direction.

*A.* I suppose romance is associated largely with the modern mind and Life of to-day all over the world.

*Q.* You cannot be too strict in censoring such films?

*A.* I would personally advocate a very strict censorship in the case of what I should call border line films, as also certain suggestive films.....

*Q.* Suggestive poses?

*A.* Yes, more than that, there are suggestive motions.

*Q.* I suppose you generally frequent the west end cinemas?

*A.* Yes, I frequent both, east end and west end.

**Q.** Then do you see Indian films?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** They are getting very popular with the Indian public?

**A.** They are. I would divide the cinema in Calcutta into the west end cinema and the east end cinema, and some are attended by an equal number of eastern and western people. But there is certainly a line separating some cinemas from others—a separation of choice, not exclusion. There are certain cinemas, for instance, in Corporation Street where nine-tenths of the audience are Europeans and Anglo-Indians and there are others in which an Indian audience preponderates. I think it depends on the locality of the cinema.

**Q.** Locality, comfort, and prices too?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** I suppose you recognise the advantages of the cinema as a means of education, to spread a knowledge of the world?

**A.** I do not think this aspect of the matter has been made sufficient use of; in fact, I think it is still in its infancy.

**Q.** You recognise the danger of interfering with it too much in its almost infant state?

**A.** You mean?

**Q.** Of interfering with the gradual growth of the cinema trade in this country?

**A.** I personally do not think so. I think myself that the cinema is one of the most productive, one of the most fertile measures by which we can improve the health of the people of this country. For instance, on the adage that prevention is better than cure, I think, if the villager knew more about even the elements of cholera, small-pox, malaria, and other diseases through films, it would save a lot of money to Government and it will educate the poor man how to prevent disease,—not to cure but how to prevent.

**Q.** That has not been made sufficient use of?

**A.** I do not think it has been made any use of.

**Q.** And you think it is the duty of Government to interest themselves in it?

**A.** I think it is the paramount duty of Government if they are going to take any part in cinema control and production.

**Q.** Similarly, in methods of agriculture?

**A.** Yes, agriculture too.

**Q.** And use of machinery?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** And in various other subjects knowledge can be conveyed by means of the film?

**A.** I think the millions of dumb India would no longer be dumb if such cinemas went into their homes and villages.

**Q.** You think Government ought to take active measures?

**A.** Yes, I would strongly advise that. As a medical man I can see no limit to the benefits of the cinema as a preventative of diseases and the dissemination of knowledge regarding agriculture, etc.

**Q.** Are you satisfied with the constitution of the Censorship Board here?

**A.** I do not know that I am quite. I think the censorship should be more representative.....

**Q.** Of citizens?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** And not of any particular trade, commerce, or the police? The police may be present, but the police often seem to predominate.

**A.** The more you keep them out the better it would be.

**Q.** And put in more of the citizens there? It would be better for the censorship?

**A.** After all a policeman is no expert on these matters. It seems his presence on the Board is merely for convenience.

**Mr. Green:** You don't object to a police representative being on the Board?

**A.** Oh, no.

**Q.** But you don't want the machinery of censorship to be too closely associated with the police?

**A.** As they have been essentially connected with the police in the past, I think that might be reduced and that is the only reason I am in favour of separation.

**Q.** In Bombay the Commissioner of Police is Chairman of the Board of Censors. But the Board has its own secretary and its own inspectors who are in no way connected with the police, you see no objection to that? It is not part of the police office.

**A.** I do not see why a policeman should be President.

**Q.** There must be some person who is immediately available to sign certificates and do a certain amount of routine between the meetings of the Board. It might be difficult—I am not opposing the idea,—but it is at any rate convenient to have an officer who is constantly on duty and constantly to be found when required.

**A.** That is certainly convenient. I was on that committee in Bombay and I never noticed any inconvenience; but they were very lax in those days.

**Q.** Was that before the Act was passed? It was a kind of unofficial Board?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** I gather you think that the younger generation is—"less stable", I think, were your words?

**A.** I might have used a better word, and said less subject to parental control.

**Q.** I think that was your general idea.

**A.** More irresponsible, if I may say so, in their living.

**Q.** I want to ask how far is the cinema responsible for that at all?

**A.** Well I think when anyone has a responsive centre, any excitement acts on it.

**Q.** Do you think it is more the cinema than, shall we say, the motor car, new methods of thought, a general lessening of respect for age?

**A.** That is so. If I may for example, take three well known sensory stimuli—alcohol, the theatre and the cinema, if a film bordering on the immoral is exhibited, it is only human for one's sensory centres to be excited specially with the additional stimulant, of alcohol in one's system at the time.

**Q.** The other view has been very strongly stressed, that it is modern educational practice in Western countries not to try and disguise sexual knowledge but rather to make it common and straightforward and to teach it to your children as soon as they enquire about it.

**A.** I quite agree with that.

**Q.** And does not that practice, whether we agree with it or not, rather lead the younger generation possibly to think less of sex than their fathers and mothers did?

**A.** Yes; but imparting knowledge of a hidden book of knowledge to the young uninitiated mind does not mean stimulation of one's sensory centres. The stimulation of those centres occurs after the adolescent period has been reached or the period of puberty.

**Q.** Do you think the stimulation is as great, granting this background of knowledge, as it would have been 30 or 40 years ago?

**A.** Things were quite different then for one considered it as a very heinous offence and immorality was largely practiced clandestinely. Now it is more

openly practiced because the general moral tone of the world has degenerated since the Last Great War.

*Q.* That is why I want to know whether even the suggestive film really has the effect it is said to have. You and I were brought up in different circumstances.

*A.* What my father and mother would tell me I would treat with great respect; but when one sees a naked girl or a girl indecently clad in a cinema film and if that person were excitable, say with a couple of whiskey and sodas inside of him, it would certainly have a different effect on him. Speaking as a medical man, I personally think a lot of harm is done and the bad points of the West are disseminated in the minds of the Indians specially, not only for his own excitement but as to what life in the West is like. He thinks it is the usual thing whereas it is really nothing but freedom of living and thought as so loosely indulged in to-day in the West.

*Q.* He does. He misinterprets it. I want to put you one question specifically because you are a doctor. Did you by any chance meet the Social Hygiene Delegation when it came to India?

*A.* I did.

*Q.* Now in a statement which we have before us they say it is at the beginning of their report—that in every province and State visited by the Delegation, the evil effects of the cinema were cited by educationists and representative citizens as one of the major factors in lowering the standard of sex conduct and in the dissemination of disease. Of course you know what they mean by "disease" in this connection. Do you think that statement is either true or too general or not supported by evidence?

*A.* I think these two points are totally antithetical. The dissemination of disease and the exposure of such films do not go hand in hand, because, unless there is disease you cannot disseminate it; and I don't see how such films can increase venereal disease.

*Q.* I suppose they mean that the film leads men and women to immoral courses and thereby to the dissemination of disease. I am asking you as a doctor whether you agree with that view?

*A.* I entirely disagree with their view, except that possibly such suggestive films may stimulate uncontrolled passions.

*Q.* We are trying to find those educationists and representative citizens who gave them this impression. I admit we have not found them yet.

*A.* I discussed this matter with Mrs. Rolfe and she told me herself that it was a conviction with her. The connection is only through the excitement of the centres. And if you have got a diseased person there you get your disease.

*Mr. Neogy:* When you speak of the misinterpretation of Western civilisation, do you think that there is any such risk also among the Anglo-Indian community because their ways of life correspond more nearly to the Western?

*A.* No. I answered that to the president. There is no risk like that. The Anglo-Indian community follows more or less the same ways and manners and customs of the Westerner.

*Chairman:* But they too are apt to think that is the life in the West. They too are ignorant of life in the West.

*A.* There is not much difference between West and East. I mean Europeans and Anglo-Indians in this point.

*Mr. Green:* Does it encourage them to believe that the extravagance shown on the films is true to life in the West?

*Mr. Neogy:* What about the life of luxury and ease and comfort depicted on the screen—don't you think that has any effect?

*A.* I don't know that that has a serious effect, though it certainly is a disturbing factor with some women.

*Q.* It does not produce discontent with their lot?

A. Yes, on some girls it may have that action; but it is only a longing; it is a nope; and I do not think it is a serious drawback.

Q. You are aware of the existence of bars in cinema theatres?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you support the continuance of these bars attached to cinemas?

A. I don't think you would get people to go unless you had something for them to drink. On a hot summer's day in Calcutta you want something to ease your parched throat. I think that is in a way, an asset to a cinema. Not that I advocate it personally but I do not think it should be stopped. The interval is usually seized for a drink, not always alcoholic.

Q. About the constitution of the Censorship Board, I take it you consider that there is too much of the police atmosphere about it.

A. I think my reply gave that impression. I do not desire in my reply to imply a sort of oppression, an official oppression on the part of the police, my view is that the present political atmosphere among Indians is surcharged with the view that in their social life there should be no official interference and as little to do with the police as is possible. That is my view too; I agree with that.

Q. And the fact that the Commissioner of Police is the president is responsible for the location of the office in the police office.

A. Yes, and that is undesirable.

Q. And the Deputy Commissioner is again the Secretary.

A. He should not be.

Q. Then there is an Army man again as a member.

A. I do not object to him being a member. I think one policeman might be on it.

Q. Not necessarily as the chairman.

A. No.

**Oral Evidence of Mr. A. N. BOSE, Aurora Cinema, Mr. H. K. DAS, Wellington Bioscope and Variety Co., Mr. J. N. GHOSE, Monarch Bioscope Co., Mr. B. B. BANERJEA, Temple Cinema, Mr. H. K. DEY, Wellington Cinema, on Friday, the 23rd December 1927.**

*Chairman:* Are you all residents of Calcutta?

A. Yes.

Q. Your place of business is in Calcutta?

A. Yes.

Q. And you take travelling cinemas about?

A. Yes.

Q. Where? In the whole of Bengal?

*Mr. Das:* Mostly in Bengal.

*Mr. Ghose:* But sometimes we go out of the province also—say Assam or the United Provinces.

Q. Is that your sole business, all of you, or do you do other business also? Do you go throughout the year or only at certain times of the year?

*Mr. Banerjee:* That is our sole business.

Q. So that you are in circuit throughout the year?

A. Yes, throughout the year. We send four or five films at a time throughout the year throughout the districts of Assam, Bengal and other places.

Q. Now when you take out the cinemas, where do you show them? In ordinary theatres or do you carry tents with you.

*Mr. Banerjee:* We take tents.

*Mr. Bose:* In some places we also hire cinema halls, institutes, and shows, in big cities, where they are available.

*Q.* Big cities outside Calcutta, you mean?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Can you tell me in what places in Bengal there are permanent cinema houses outside Calcutta.

*Mr. Das:* At Chandernagore there are two cinemas. One at Chinsura, where there other institutes and permanent houses.

*Mr. Bose:* There is one at Burdwan, two were started but one failed. Then there are two houses in Cossipore, a suburb of Calcutta. Then at Mymensingh there is a house. At Dacca there are two houses, at Chittagong there is a house. These, I believe, are all the permanent houses in Bengal.

*Q.* Are there any in Cuttack and Puri?

*Mr. Das:* They have just started a permanent show in Cuttack—last Saturday. There was one before but it failed. And in Puri they have got a cinema show.

*Q.* I suppose you take out your cinema shows on occasions of *melas* and so on?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Would more than one of you go to the same place on occasions of *melas*?

*A.* In some cases accidentally more than one go. We try to avoid one another.

*Q.* When you go there, do you get a good audience?

*A.* Not always.

*Q.* What sort of places do you choose? Towns with a population of ten thousand up to 15,000? What sort of places do you go to? Which is the smallest town you visit generally?

*Mr. Bose:* The smallest town is Bhubapara, with a population of about 5,000.

*Q.* You go to places which have a population sometimes of 5,000?

*Mr. Banerjee:* That is a mill area.

*Q.* So you think you will get a good audience there? You think your films are more popular with the labouring class than with the agricultural population?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* I suppose they are not able to pay?

*A.* They are very poor.

*Q.* Whereas the mill hands and those working in factories, they get weekly wages or monthly wages. You think they are easier customers for you? That is your experience?

*Mr. Bose:* Yes.

*Q.* Now what sort of films do you take? Where do you get your supply from?

*Mr. Banerjee:* We hire films from hire services. There are many here. The Universal, the International, and some other private companies.

*Q.* Are there any Bengali companies?

*A.* The Aurora Cinema give films on hire and the London Bioscope Co. also.

*Q.* Do you take any Indian films with you for exhibition?

*A.* Sometimes we take Indian films from the Aurora. They can supply them at very cheap rates. About Rs. 50 or Rs. 60 for 2 days instalment. We have to show a two-day programme here for which they charge Rs. 50 or Rs. 60.



*Q.* For a two-day programme you are able to pay so much as Rs. 50 or Rs. 60?

*A.* For Indian films. And sometimes we also take Madans' films. They charge Rs. 200 or Rs. 300 for their films. So for this purpose we have to hire American films from outside firms—such as the Universal.

*Q.* How long do you exhibit the cinemas—how many hours?

*A.* Generally two hours.

*Q.* And so you give a programme of about 8,000 feet, I suppose?

*A.* Yes, ordinarily we show about 8,000 feet.

*Q.* I suppose it is a mixture. Not one kind, but some comic and some fighting and some of these things combined.

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* And sometimes you take Indian films also?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Which is more popular? Western films?

*A.* Fighting dramas and some comics.

*Mr. Das:* Thrilling subjects mostly. They are more appreciated.

*Mr. Ghose:* Comics and thrilling subjects are more appreciated by the mill hands and the people we deal with.

*Q.* Do you carry much of this social drama?

*A.* No, that is not much appreciated.

*Q.* So you don't carry it?

*A.* Sometimes we do. But very little.

*Q.* There are social dramas, only nowadays they are not appreciated.

*A.* But I am told 6 or 7 years ago, before the Universal Co. had registered these serial films, at that time they were interested in all those films, but now they are selling these films for Rs. 300 or 400. This Universal Film Co. after using all these films here they are selling their rights here to other merchants, they are buying for Rs. 200 to Rs. 300 and they are showing every now and again to the men in the mill areas.

*Q.* Who is showing?

*A.* There are many other companies here.

*Q.* Travelling companies?

*A.* No, there are other people.

*Q.* How many travelling companies are there?

*A.* 10 or 12. Day by day they are producing companies. Sometimes we meet with them and we know them.

*Q.* So there are more than 12 companies in Calcutta who go about the province? But I didn't follow what you said about the Universal. What was it?

*A.* Yes, there are many good social dramas produced by some English or American firms but they have not established themselves. They are shown in some houses but they are not popular with the masses, because of these thrilling serials that the Universal Co. are bringing out, these fighting and thrilling serials. Nowadays they are selling all these films for Rs. 200 or Rs. 300 and the people of the ordinary class they are obtaining all these films, they are always showing to the people every now and then. So this vogue for thrilling serials is based on the masses.

*Q.* It is all right. Anyway you say the masses do not like to see social dramas?

*Q.* If we show them, why not?

*Q.* And do they like Indian films when you take them?

*A.* Yes, they like them.

*Q.* But you have to pay more for Indian films?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* How much do you pay for an Indian film and how much for a western film?

*Mr. Das:* Not less than Rs. 50 for one day.

*Q.* But you have to travel about? Supposing you kept it for 50 days? You take it to place 200 miles away and have you to return it?

*A.* We take it by railway parcel. We receive it on the very day we perform and after performing we return it on the very next day.

*Q.* So that if you keep it more than a day, you have to pay more.

*A.* Yes, we have to pay a detention fee.

*Q.* So for one day's performance you have to pay Rs. 50 for a picture?

*A.* That is the minimum. Sometimes we pay more.

*Mr. Neogy:* How many shows do you give per day?

*A.* Sometimes one show and sometimes two shows.

*Chairman:* How much more have you paid sometimes? What is the maximum you have paid?

*Mr. Ghose:* We only get Indian films from the Aurora Cinema.

*Q.* What is the amount you have paid there?

*A.* Rs. 100.

*Q.* It ranges from Rs. 50 to Rs. 100? Now supposing you take a western film what do you pay for it?

*A.* About Rs. 40 or Rs. 45. We have paid up to Rs. 80 sometimes for a programme. That means say 8 reels.

*Q.* For how many days?

*A.* For half a week. That is 3 days or 4 days.

*Mr. Bose:* We pay Rs. 40 to Rs. 80 according to the class and condition of the film.

*Q.* Why don't you get Indian films like that for a week or half a week? Will they not supply you?

*A.* We go to small places. If we find it paying we keep it.

*Q.* That is always calculated on the daily rate. You pay for Indian films at a daily rate? For western films you pay at a 3 days or 4 days rate? Therefore western films are cheaper for you.

*Mr. Das:* Yes, certainly.

*Q.* But do they attract as big an audience as the Indian film?

*A.* No.

*Q.* Indian films attract a bigger audience than western films?

*A.* Certainly.

*Q.* Everywhere, wherever you go?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Have you even seen a Bombay film—a film produced by a Bombay company? I mean Indian films produced at Bombay.

*Mr. Banerjee:* Yes.

*Q.* Are they popular?

*A.* Yes.

*Mr. Das:* Not so popular. If the titles are given in the vernacular, whether it be a Bombay or Bengal film, they like it.

*Q.* But do you give titles to Bengali films?

*Mr. Bose:* We have been trying Bombay films with Bengali titles, but they are not as popular as Bengali films in Bengal.

*Mr. Green:* Are Bombay films more popular than western films?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* That shows that Indian films are very popular with the people?

*Mr. Ghose:* It is very difficult to get them.

*Mr. Das:* The charges are high. We are unable to afford it.

*Q.* So you don't get them in sufficient quantities and you have to pay more?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* So you would all like more Indian films to be produced in the country?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Do you ever take any educational films?

*Mr. Banerjee:* No, Sir. Where will we get educational films?

*Q.* Supposing you get them, about malaria or any disease. About 500 feet or something of that sort. Do you think you can show them to the people?

*Mr. Das:* Occasionally.

*Mr. Bose:* We are showing these films for Government, for the public health department now.

*Q.* Where?

*A.* In villages in Bengal. At present we have two contracts, one for the Moorshidabad district and another for the Krishnagar district. We are showing only health films there.

*Q.* Do Government pay you anything for it?

*A.* Yes, Government are paying us a nominal amount to cover our expenses and travelling.

*Q.* And you include it in your programme?

*A.* No, we are showing only health films. We have produced some Bengali films for the health department which are very popular.

*Q.* And you take them and show them?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* But do you charge the people anything when you show them?

*A.* No, that is a free show, organised by the Government officials.

*Q.* And they use your projector for the purpose?

*A.* Projector and our men to look after the shows and all that.

*Q.* Are they popular with the people? Do they understand these health films?

*A.* They are very popular.

*Q.* And you would like to have more of these films? But will you show them as part of your programme? Do you think you can include them in the programme where you don't charge fees?

*A.* If it is not costly. If we get them cheap we will include them in our programme.

*Q.* Say 500 feet or something like that.

*A.* It would be a sufficient attraction.

*Q.* It would be a variety and you could include it. They can use you for this purpose?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* When you go about, do people talk to you and say you must bring such and such a film. "Next time, please bring such and such a film."

*Mr. Das:* They often ask for serial films.

*Mr. Banerjee:* Serials and Bengali films also. Mythological drama they also ask for. But where will we get these mythological dramas. They are charging Rs. 400 or Rs. 500 for a two days' show.

*Q.* What do you mean by mythological shows?

*A.* Indian mythology.

*Q.* They charge you Rs. 400 for that?

*A.* Yes, Rs. 400 to 500 for a two days' show. And also they demand a deposit for such a film.

*Mr. Green:* That is quite natural.

*Chairman:* And they are very popular when you take them?

*Mr. Das:* Certainly.

*Q.* But how is it you don't produce more films in Bengal?

*Mr. Bose:* It is very expensive and we have not got the money.

*Q.* I don't mean you personally. But generally, how is it, when there is so great a demand for Indian films, that more films are not produced?

*A.* Because there is no such capitalist. Only Madan, and he is also wanting us to pay much. How can we pay?

*Q.* Here you are, many travelling companies, why don't you put your heads together and go and start a producing concern which will pay for itself?

*Mr. Das:* We are all of us rather poor.

*Mr. Bose:* Not only poor, but we barely cover our costs by going about with these shows. It is a struggle for us.

*Mr. Banerjee:* And also on account of mutual jealousies. Brothers of the same trade.

*Q.* I suppose now and then you show some love making films, don't you?

*A.* Sometimes.

*Q.* Do people like such films? The people whom you go to in the mofussil, do they care for such sort of scenes?

*Mr. Bose:* They have no particular liking for it but neither do they object.

*Q.* They don't take much notice of it?

*A.* No, they don't.

*Mr. Banerjee:* The masses never object to anything. They simply sit it out and go away when the picture is done.

*Q.* They don't think about it. I mean do they get spoilt by seeing such things?

*Mr. Bose:* I don't think so.

*Q.* Have you anything special to say about your difficulties?

*Mr. Ghose:* Yes, we find a very great difficulty in securing licences. We have got to take some licence from the licensing authority in every district wherever we go every time.

*Q.* Licence from whom?

*A.* From the district magistrate. And here in Calcutta from the Police Commissioner.

*Q.* For exhibiting?

*Mr. Bose:* According to the Cinema Act, we have got to take a licence whenever we give a public show. In the presidency towns we have to apply to the Commissioner of Police, in the mofussil towns to the highest authority there, the district magistrate. Sometimes we go into the interior and from there the party has to go to the magistrate's headquarters to make the application. Two or 3 days elapse before he gets the licence and that means a loss to us and a lot of expense.

*Q.* You mean unless you go to the district headquarters you cannot get a licence?

*A.* Exactly.

*Q.* Do you get an annual licence or for a short period?

*A.* For one month or two months. A temporary licence.

*Q.* Why don't you take a permanent licence?

*A.* There is no such provision. This is what we want. We want a licence for the whole province and if it is passed by the headquarters it should hold everywhere.

**Q.** You don't want to have the trouble of applying for a licence every time? You want the licence to have currency throughout the province?

**A.** Yes.

**Mr. Banerjee:** And further we have to take much trouble about that because in a suburb town there are also many courts and we have to apply to the district magistrate there. Their clerks also demand passes and other concessions. We have much trouble over that. And before erecting our tent there we have to send our man to get the licence and that means delay.

**Q.** So if you get a licence which will have currency throughout the province it will be useful to you?

**Mr. Ghose:** Yes. Otherwise we suffer loss. We have to sit idle for days together. Here in Calcutta we only get a licence for 15 days and we have to pay Rs. 5 for that licence each time. Then calculating Rs. 5 for each 15 days, sometimes we pay more than the permanent house.

**Mr. Green:** What is the licence, for the generator and the projector?

**A.** No, for exhibiting.

**Q.** For the place in which it is?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Supposing that place already has a licence, do you have to get a licence?

**Chairman:** Suppose there is a public cinema, have you to take a licence all the same?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Supposing there is a permanent theatre and you use it for a day or two, when you take your cinema?

**A.** Oh yes. Even for one day if we wish to show, we have to get a licence. And from one stage if we have to go to another stage, we have still to apply for a licence.

**Q.** Have you got a copy of the licence which you get?

**A.** Unfortunately not.

**Q.** Could you send it?

**A.** Oh yes. Shall I go for it now, Sir?

**A.** Oh no, it is not necessary. You may send it to the office to-morrow. Send it by post to the Secretary, who will receive it. We want to see the nature of the licence.

**A.** Then there are two other points, Sir. Our Indian production is not sufficient so we have got to use these English films.

**Q.** Otherwise you would use Indian films more.

**A.** But on account of the high duty on English films we cannot get them ourselves. What we have got to do is to hire them and the hire is far greater than what it would cost us to buy them.

**Q.** You want them rendered cheaper?

**A.** Yes, if possible.

**Q.** But if you will get more Indian films you will be satisfied?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** If you get more Indian films you will be satisfied?

**A.** Yes.

**Mr. Ghosh:** In order to get the films we import censored, the Censorship Board has no arrangements for projection. We have no permanent show where we can project them.

**Q.** Some of you do import films yourself?

**Mr. Dey:** Yes.

**Q.** You mean there is no place where you can exhibit your films and you have to apply to people who have got theatres already?

**A.** Yes.

*Q.* How many films do you import?

*Mr. Dey:* Very few.

*Mr. Bannerjee:* On account of the *ad valorem* duty it is not possible to import many.

*Q.* You buy second hand films which are very cheap in England?

*Mr. Bose:* Yes.

*Q.* How much do they charge in England?

*Mr. Bannerjee:* 10 shillings a reel.

*Q.* You pay 10 shillings a reel there and you have to pay Rs. 37 here?

*A.* Yes, and also freight and other charges. About Rs. 80 or 82 we have to pay.

*Mr. Neogy:* Have you any fixed scale of admission prices? At what rate do you sell your tickets?

*A.* Mostly 4 annas and 8 annas. Where we cannot get four annas we reduce it to 2 annas and even one anna.

*Q.* 8 annas and 4 annas are the usual rates?

*Mr. Dey:* 2 annas also is the usual rate.

*Mr. Bannerjee:* In *melas* we charge one anna because they are ordinary class of people and they cannot pay more.

*Q.* You are not troubled by the entertainment tax?

*A.* No.

*Mr. Bannerjee:* The Corporation take Rs. 12/8 from us.

*Q.* What is that tax for?

*A.* The Corporation gives us a license for showing the cinematograph in Calcutta.

*Q.* That is the trade license?

*A.* No. Over and above the trade license. That is under the Theatre Act.

*Q.* Is it a new imposition?

*A.* Yes, and we are also fighting against it.

*Chairman:* Kindly send us copies of every license you have to take, the trade license, theatre license, police license, and any other license you have to take.

*Mr. Neogy:* And let us know the fees you have to pay for each of these things.

*A.* Yes.

*Mr. Bose:* And there is fire brigade license and warehouse license

*Q.* Do you keep much storage of films?

*A.* I have got to keep.

*Q.* But I thought you hire films and give them back and ordinarily you do not store them. *Mr. Bose,* you import also?

*A.* Yes. I used to import before, but since the imposition of this tax I have stopped. I find it more easy to buy films locally.

*Chairman:* How much do you pay when you buy locally?

*A.* That depends on the condition of the films. Some of the films we bought from the India Films Limited— we bought them very cheap.

*Q.* That is, western films?

*A.* Yes.

*Mr. Neogy:* When you go to any *motussil* town does the municipality charge you anything for the license?

*Mr. Bose:* No.

*Mr. Dey:* They do not charge, but we have to take permission from the municipality.

*Q.* In addition to the District Magistrate?

A. Yes.

Q. That does not cost you anything?

A. No.

Mr. Day: But sometimes there is trouble.

Q. Your point is there are too many authorities with whom you have to deal?

A. Yes.

Q. You get Indian films generally from the Aurora Company. May I know the names of a few of the Indian films which you have shown?

A. "Krishna Sakha," "Bidya Sundar", "Ratnakar".

Q. Where do the Aurora Company get them from?

A. They produced them.

Q. So, for your Indian films you are practically confined to one of the producers?

A. Yes.

Mr. Bannerjee: Before that, there was another company called the Taj Mahal Company, they have gone into liquidation now. At that time Mr. Bose was the proprietor of the Aurora Company and he had also taken films from them. We have also shown their films.

Q. Do you think that films like "Durgesh Nandini" would be quite as popular as mythological films in the rural areas?

Mr. Bannerjee: No.

Q. The audiences that you generally get—will they be satisfied with a drama like "Durgesh Nandini"?

A. No. They will like mythological films more than these other things.

Mr. Bannerjee: Religious films produced in other places do not correctly interpret Bengali customs and ideas.

Q. You mean they interpret certain mythological subjects in such a way that they do not accord with the Bengali idea of those things?

Mr. Bose: Yes.

Q. Is the Aurora Company specialising in the production of mythological films?

Mr. Bose: We are doing only that. I am the owner of the Aurora Company.

Q. Do you supply these films to any of the permanent theatres also, or do you look to the travelling cinemas mostly?

A. Permanent theatres in Bengal and Bihar and Assam take films from us regularly.

Q. Have any of your films been shown in Calcutta?

A. Yes, at the Purna Theatre, and the Star Theatre. We hired the Star theatre temporarily and showed the pictures on our own account.

Q. But your main customers are the touring companies?

A. Yes.

Q. And it pays you to produce particularly for the travelling showmen?

A. Yes, it does in the long run.

Chairman: What is the largest length you produce?

Mr. Bose: 7 reels of about 8,000 feet.

Mr. Neogy: Would you mind telling us the average cost of production?

Mr. Bose: The last one cost us about Rs. 12,000. Professor Bose gave evidence on our behalf so far as the producing side was concerned.

Q. Do you think if you were to show only Indian mythological films you could do away with the foreign films altogether? Or do you think the Indian audience would still want to see western films as a variety?

*Mr. Bannerjee* : Yes. They will always demand something new, something novel.

*Colonel Crawford* : Mr. Bose, you are an actual producer, supplying the travelling cinemas?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you own any travelling cinemas yourself?

A. Yes. Sometimes we put up as many as 6 cinemas.

Q. How many do you own, Mr. Das?

A. One or two, sometimes one, sometimes two.

Q. Do you own the machinery yourself for the two?

A. Yes.

Q. What are they mounted on? How do you send them about the country?

A. By bullock cart.

Q. What area do you cover?

A. The whole of Bengal and Assam.

*Mr. Das* : Only the suburbs of Calcutta.

*Mr. Ghosh* : Suburbs of Calcutta and also out in the districts.

*Mr. Dey* : Suburbs of Calcutta and Bengal.

*Mr. Bannerjee* : Suburbs of Calcutta, and sometimes we also take contracts for the U. P. and part of Bengal.

Q. You never thought of combining and dividing up the mofussil so as to allocate to each company certain areas? Do you compete with one another?

*Mr. Bannerjee* : That may be done, but unless you can enforce the thing, the people would not accept it.

*Mr. Bose* : That will never be.

Q. What is the size of audience that you will get in the mofussil?

*Mr. Bannerjee* : Sometimes, 100, 80, 60 or 200.

*Mr. Ghosh* : In *melas* we sometimes get as much as 500 or 600. Ordinarily we get about 200 people. The average price of the ticket will be 2 annas.

*Mr. Green* : Your average is under 4 annas?

*Mr. Ghosh* : Yes.

*Colonel Crawford* : Would you show twice a day?

*Mr. Bannerjee* : In *melas* we show 8 or 10 times a day.

Q. But the amount of money received by exhibition does not admit of your spending very much more on your films?

*Mr. Ghosh* : We cannot make any profit. We have to pay hire on the films and so on and after all the expenditure we do not make any profit.

*Mr. Das* : Besides that, our staff is very big. We have to take these things from here to there every now and then.

Q. Do you think that the secondhand films are doing you any good? Do people like secondhand films, or do they want something better?

*Mr. Bose* : They are satisfied with the secondhand films that we show.

Q. Have you noticed any desire on the part of your audience to see anything else than Indian films? You say Indian films are most popular?

*Mr. Bose* : Yes. The public like adventurous films and serials. They clamour for them.

Q. A gentleman who is showing films up in Assam told us that his coolies say, "We want to see something of the rest of the world." Do you find any demand amongst your audiences for films from other parts of the world?

*Mr. Bose* : As a matter of fact we are also catering for the Assam gardens for the last 3 or 4 years. They like mostly jungle films, adventurous films and comedies. And the gentlemen there in charge of those gardens also prefer them. Barring that, they do not want the coolies to see any other film.



*Q.* Are you noticing that the cinema is gradually getting more popular out in the mofussil?

*A.* It is, **decidedly**.

*Q.* And the people will be prepared to pay a slightly increased price gradually?

*A.* Yes. We tried in one or two places to double the rate for the Bengali films that we produced and we found people were paying it.

*Mr. Dey:* That is for Indian films because people seldom get Indian films.

*Mr. Ghosh:* You cannot increase the rate always.

*Q.* Supposing you were to use vernacular captions for your English films would they be more popular?

*Mr. Bose:* We tried that too; for the time being it pays, but later on its attraction fades away. Men will not go twice to see the film. Whereas if it is an Indian film they will go as many times as they can.

*Mr. Green:* I suppose you cannot do anything in the monsoon?

*Mr. Ghosh:* In the monsoon we hire institutes and halls and show there.

*Mr. Das:* Sometimes we have tarpaulin arrangements for the purpose.

*Q.* You find difficulty in taking them about in the monsoon?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* I take it in the monsoon you do not do much business?

*Mr. Dey:* No, we are losing then.

*Q.* In the fair season you have got your own tents also? You have got to carry them about?

*Mr. Dey:* Yes, and seating accommodation also.

*Q.* People are not content to sit on the ground?

*A.* Those who pay 2 annas will be content to sit on the ground, but others would not. For the rest we provide benches, chairs and galleries. We have to carry them.

*Mr. Das:* That is why we have got to carry a big staff also.

*Q.* About the license that you were talking about, I imagine the license is required so that the local authorities may see that there is no risk of fire?

*Mr. Bannerjee:* Yes.

*Q.* I take it you would not wish to take upon yourself the responsibility of the risk of a fire in which the whole audience or a great portion of it might get burnt to death?

*Mr. Dey:* We always take particular care.

*Q.* Supposing the local authorities said, "All right, we do not want the license, but we will prosecute you if there is any fire", would you accept that risk?

*Mr. Dey:* How can we take that responsibility?

*Chairman:* Would they cease to prosecute you if you had a license?

*Mr. Bose:* Even if we have a license we may be prosecuted.

*Mr. Green:* If they can prove that there was negligence or that you did not comply with the terms of the license. The license is to a certain extent a protection?

*Mr. Bannerjee:* Yes.

*Mr. Das:* We generally keep our things outside and in case of fire there is no possibility of danger to the audience. The audience can easily get out.

*Mr. Bose:* None of us had any such accident so far.

*Q.* It is a question of public safety. You show so openly that when there is fire your audience can get away very easily?

*Mr. Das:* Every side is open and they can get away. No such accident has happened.

*Q.* Your audiences in the mofussil towns, are they mostly literate people who can read?

*Mr. Das:* Mostly illiterate.

*Mr. Bose:* You can only show a film that has been censored, and the license is for that purpose. That is one of the reasons for their demanding a license.

We have got licensed operators.

### **Written Statement of Mr. S. K. BHADURY, Actor-Manager, Calcutta.**

#### **INTRODUCTORY.**

1. (a) (1) I have some experience of film taking and was connected with the industry for two years. I am at present the dramatic producer of the Natyamandir considered to be the premier dramatic company in Bengal.

(2) I can speak of Bengal only. Among the educated classes the film habit is growing. In large towns and labour centres the movies are very popular with the masses.

(b) Largely college students, school boys, clerks, chokras and working classes in general.

(c) Not a very large proportion.

#### **PART I.**

#### *Film Industry in India*

3. Of Indian films the mythological, of foreign films the serials. It is only with the educated classes that the highly artistic production like *Intolerance*, *Way Down East* or *Orphans of the Storm* are popular.

4. No. Because of the dearth of Indian films.

5. Indian films, such as they are at present, cannot meet the demand. But the number of producing firms is on the increase.

(a) They are improving.

(b) Very much so.

(c) Certainly it is more profitable to show Indian films. Any number of them—*Joydeb*, *Sankaracharya*, *Krishnakanta's Will*, *Durgesh Nandini* to cite a few recent instances.

6. (a) Yes, certainly.

(b) (1) Mostly social films particularly the film versions of well-known works of fiction by Tagore, Bankim, Sarat Chatterjee, etc.

(2) Films of mythological interest and films of adventure.

8. (a) No.

(b) Want of intelligent organisation as also of capital. Besides able and efficient men are not attracted—because there is no assurance of continued employment and the profession is not remunerative. The trade is flooded with amateurs—the film producing companies try to enlist the services of as many amateurs as they can. Thus keeping down the cost of production.

#### *Difficulties attending distribution.*

There are no distributing agencies. A producing company with small capital stands absolutely at the mercy of the exhibitors. In Bengal there is a single firm. In Calcutta and Howrah of a dozen houses, ten belong to himself.

9. I cannot say anything about foreign films and their rates. About Indian Films they cost little and whatever the quality that are sure to pay. In Bengal of all available houses more than 3/4ths are owned or controlled by

a single firm. In Calcutta and Howrah of a dozen houses ten belong to them. This is explained by the fact that they were the first to appreciate the possibilities of the industry and that they have a very large capital behind them. This firm also produces films on a large scale.

12. The amusement tax is a real handicap. It has practically killed the Bengalee Theatre. Its effect on the film industry which is still in its infancy is bound to be disastrous. It tells on the exhibitors and this indirectly on the producers particularly such of them as are without sufficient capital.

13. I should like to tax heavily all imported films but all raw materials in connection with the industry should be duty free. This will stimulate indigenous production.

14. Certainly if the Government will let private firms to take such films for them. It will mean nothing to the trade if the state undertakes their productions.

The demand for such films is bound to come.

15. Certainly. A splendid back ground, advantage of light and cheap cost of production all of them tend to help the growth of the indigenous industry. Besides the Indian film with vernacular titles is always extremely paying.

16. In Bengal at least given the chance of continued and remunerative employment there will be no dearth of producers etc. There is ample material and technique is sure to be evolved. Foreign direction will be worse than useless production. If the Indian films are to succeed and have a world market it must be essentially Indian in character. At present Indian films are modelled largely on the foreign sample and therefore fail to please the critical eye.

To raise the level of the Indian film up to the standard of Europe and America it will be necessary, for a few years at least to send a dozen men abroad to be trained as camera men. The camera work is certainly of an inferior grade here. Opportunities should also be provided for the Indian producers to go abroad and see for himself how things are done there.

18. Yes.

Firstly, by insisting on the exhibition of Indian films up to a certain definite percentage beginning with 40 per cent. and gradually working up to 75 per cent.

Secondly, offering contracts to *bona fide* producers of Educational, Agricultural, Hygienic and other films.

Thirdly, by instituting technical scholarships for training in photography and production.

Fourthly, by imposing duty on imported films and abolishing duties on raw material.

Fifthly, by help from the Archeological Department, the Police and the Military.

Sixthly, by granting liberal commissions over railway and steamship lines to film parties and to the carriage of films and film goods.

19. I believe very favourably.

20. (a) Not much—I consider the small expenditure involved thoroughly justifiable inasmuch as the industry when once it is on its legs will provide employment for thousands.

(b) Yes from taxes on imported films and if any amusement tax is levied the money ought to be fully ear-marked for the betterment of this industry.

21. A state agency will hamper but a non-official organisation under government auspices may be helpful.

22. So long as there is no chance of Indian films being accepted in other parts of the Empire such participation can only injure the indigenous industry. In other words it will only help to displace the American film and be a dangerous rival to the Indian film.

## PART II.

24. (a), (b), (c) I am of opinion that Western films, British or American, have a deleterious effect on the mind of the younger people generally. It is not that they are immoral or criminally suggestive. The fact is the whole atmosphere of these films engender in the minds of our youngmen heightened notion of life, of ease, of creature comforts generally unsettling their minds and producing in them a vague sense of discontent with their actual environments. Speaking from my personal experience of college men for the last two decades I can state with the greatest emphasis that this is a very serious and real danger.

(d) Subject to my statement above I have very little complaint against the censors with regard to either (1) or (2).

25. Yes. My idea is to have separate Boards for Indian and foreign films. In any case the police man is unnecessary on the board. The Bogie of sedition is a great deterrent in producing dramas—I speak from my experience of the stage which is censored by the police—which are racy of soil.

26. (a) Sooner these too soft susceptibilities are done away with the better for India.

(b) None that I know of except Buddha which I hear was banned in Rangoon.

27. The masses and even a very large proportion of the so-called educated classes certainly do not understand the west.

(a) But I do not see how the censor can help. You cannot shut out western civilisation for good or for evil.

27. (b) I have seen a few such films. I cannot recall the names. The Indian rajahs are generally made the butt of ridicule—not that some of them don't deserve it. Indians, the common people, in one film I saw were represented as a lot of sneaky and blood-thirsty cowards.

28. (a) and (b) Generally speaking pictures do not contribute very largely to the debasement of moral of either children or adolescents.

29. Useless.

30. No.

31. Yes.

32. Subject to my reply to 24 (c) satisfactory only there is sometimes a tendency to prudery and certainly here in Bengal being almost a part of the Police department it has a strong political bias.

33. (a) Yes.

(b) May.

(c) Yes.

34. (a) No.

(2) Certainly it would be hard lines for a producer in Madras to run up to Delhi to have his production passed by the censor.

34. (b) I do not consider multiplication of Boards necessary. Provinces may be left to take care of themselves in this matter.

35. The board should be non-official with representatives from the trade, the local legislature, and the general public. There may be one I. C. S. or I. E. S. officer to look after the Government side.

(a) School masters, religious missionaries and faddists of any kind ought to be barred.

37. I do not consider any safe guards necessary.

45. I have no objection to licensing or to inspection. But this will only add to the number of free passes which the poor exhibitor will have to provide. Already he is sufficiently oppressed.

**Oral Evidence of Mr. S. K. BHADURY, Actor, on Friday, the 23rd  
December 1927.**

*Chairman:* We had the pleasure of seeing you act the other day and it was a very good performance. There are one or two points on which I should like to have the benefit of your advice. Do you think, from your knowledge of the acting profession in the province, that film acting is likely to get popular with young men in the first place?

A. Yes, I think it is very likely.

Q. And also women?

A. Yes.

Q. You will be able to get good women for film acting?

A. We can get good artists.

Q. I suppose you have not acted for the film yourself?

A. I have. Originally I worked with the Madans. I produced about 2 or 3 films with them. Of course my name did not appear. There was an Italian camera man working and they thought it was better to give a foreign name. That is their idea right through. Later on I started the Taj Mahal Company and I produced two films there and then I left it. It was not run on intelligent lines and the company came to grief and the films produced by them have been bought up by Madans.

Q. Every one has told us that the Indian film is a paying proposition.

A. Yes.

Q. As a film it is a paying proposition, and yet company after company has been failing. No one has taken to it for more than 2 or 3 years.

A. The reason is this. As I have stated somewhere in my statement, there is great want of intelligent organisation and there is a good deal of mutual jealousy. Everybody wants to be a producer. People who put capital in the industry are mostly amateurs, they are attracted to the industry not because of the return they would get but because of other reasons, and the man finds for his producer a man whom he will be able to control and he need not necessarily be the ablest or the most efficient person available.

Q. You are an intelligent person who has taken interest in the industry. What is the remedy for all this?

A. People who invest money in business at present—they are rather shy about these things. I think if the Government takes an interest in this industry and helps it by giving contracts to firms for producing films for their educational, agricultural, hygienic and other purposes, if it is run on business lines, just as Madans are doing, and if there is a little bit of Government backing, I think capital may be raised and the thing may be placed on a good footing.

Q. If co-operative societies be started for the purpose of producing films, do you think that will be a paying proposition?

A. The difficulty is who will do it?

Q. That will introduce some sort of Government assistance as it were, there will be an inspector of co-operative societies . . .

A. It may answer, it may be successful. The greatest difficulty in Bengal is this. A good deal of money has been spent on the film industry. The Indo-British Film Company spent about a lakh of rupees, the Taj Mahal Company spent about Rs. 80,000. But the difficulty was this, they would never combine.

Q. And each of them goes to the wall?

A. Yes. About the Taj Mahal Company the greatest difficulty was they could not show their films. There are about a dozen houses in Calcutta of which 10 are controlled by Madans. But at that time Madan would not exhibit any one of our films.

**Q.** Now he is showing the films.

**A.** Now, he has bought them up altogether and he is showing them.

**Q.** In the case of Indian films there are difficulties as regards facilities for exhibition?

**A.** There is difficulty in Bengal. I do not know anything about outside Bengal.

**Q.** About acting and other things do you advocate scholarships abroad,—for technique . . . .

**A.** The greatest want is probably of a camera man. Camera work is very inferior here and I should like camera men to be trained from abroad and *bona fide* producers may be helped to go abroad and see how things are done there.

**Mr. Green:** Helped by Government?

**A.** Yes.

**Mr. Neogy:** What do you mean by *bona fide* producers? You mean those who are already in the line?

**A.** I know 3 or 4 who would make capital producers, but they have no opportunity. It is rather difficult to find the real type of man who would succeed. For myself I think it would be better in the beginning to choose successful men from the stage to learn the art of producing and they must have some education.

**Q.** You mean direction?

**A.** Not merely direction with regard to acting.

**Q.** Producing comprises so many items, scenario writing . . . .

**A.** From scenario writing right up to the joining of the film—the whole thing is called production. There should be one man who has got that sense of unity, who can think in pictures, so that he can make the pictures successful. The difficulty at the present moment is that the films which are produced now are merely so many patches joined together; they are not thought out as a whole.

**Chairman:** You know it is work which requires division of labour?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Then what is the good of sending one man to learn all these things together?

**A.** Not all these things. The producer who goes there will see how things are done. This industry is 20 or 25 years old. In 25 years it has evolved to its present state in the west and it will take about 20 or 25 years for India to learn to produce. But what has been done in the west,—if we can see with our own eyes, certainly it will be a great help.

**Mr. Neogy:** You say there should be proper division of labour and at the same time there should be somebody to co-ordinate the efforts of the various units?

**A.** Yes. One unit is the camera man. The other is the scenario writer. Of course, he is bound to be controlled by the producer, as also the camera man. There are the actors. Good actors and actresses are available in Bengal. Scenario writers are available in Bengal. You have a lot of story writers, and as a matter of fact, journalism as a profession is beginning to pay now,—writing stories in journals. And there are lots of fiction writers, a good many stories have been written and it is not very difficult to learn the technique of scenario writing.

**Chairman:** So you would send such people for six months or 8 months . .

**A.** For writing scenarios nobody need go, but I would like the camera man and the producer to go abroad.

**Mr. Green:** Continuity men—I think that is the term they use for people who have to see that the film is properly continuous?

**A.** Yes.

*Chairman:* To get a good conception of the whole thing and produce it like that?

A. Yes.

Q. You believe then there should be more competition among exhibitors than there is at present in Calcutta.

A. As a matter of fact in Bengal there is only one exhibitor. These other people, except Bose of the Aurora Cinema, are very small companies and they don't know exactly their wants.

Q. So you suggest at least for future adoption that no one interest should have more than 50 per cent. of the exhibition.

A. I think there ought to be no particular firm who should have under its control more than 10 houses.

*Mr. Green:* In the whole of India?

A. No, in a particular area; I am speaking of Bengal.

Q. A provincial area?

A. Yes.

*Chairman:* Do you know the circuit system in the film world seems to be the common feature?

A. In other parts I am told there are distributing agencies; the houses are owned by particular agencies and the programmes are supplied by the distributing agencies. But here the houses are owned by a particular firm--they distribute and they produce their own films.

Q. That is due to the lack of enterprise on the part of other people?

A. Certainly. They came first into the field and put all their money into it. It is not their fault.

*Mr. Green:* Can you penalise them for it?

A. No certainly not. But there is one thing, if the monopolists like, they can produce much better films, but their idea is to keep down their costs, because they know Indian films, whatever their quality, will go with Indian audiences.

*Chairman:* You believe in the quota system?

A. I do strongly, so that there may be some interest in raising the standard of production. There ought to be competition and people would like to see better films.

Q. I notice you want 40 per cent. gradually rising to 70 per cent., but do you think we can get the 40 per cent.?

A. I don't know; you will be better informed than myself on that point.

Q. You see the production is so small compared with the requirements. You have enumerated what advantages you would like to be introduced. Would you say that such advantages should be given only to Indian registered concerns and not to anybody and everybody who wants to take films in the country.

A. Indian registered concerns. And this multiplicity of licences is a great handicap.

Q. What are the licences, do you know?

A. For example in our theatre we have to take out a licence for the trade, a trade licence; we have got to take out a licence from the Corporation for using the building as a house of amusement; then we have got to take out another licence a company licence. These three licences are necessary.

*Mr. Neogy:* If it is a limited company?

A. No, a private partnership too.

*Chairman:* But they talk of licences in the mofussil?

A. Oh, yes if we go on tour say to Benares, I have to take out a licence from the Magistrate for permission to stay and then I have to get permission for every single week that I stay there. Then I have to pay the big municipalities a temporary amusement tax. And this applies to films also.

*Q.* You also come under the same conditions as a travelling dramatic troupe?

*A.* Yes. Some of us go on tour; and the number of passes that have to be issued is simply tremendous, any number of them. If I go to the magistracy, there is the whole magistracy clamouring for free passes of admission. Here in Calcutta we have to fork out a lot of passes.

*Mr. Green:* Isn't there a limit to the number of passes you can give?

*A.* No. For example I have to stage a drama . . .

*Q.* A drama, not a cinema.

*A.* I was speaking of the stage but the conditions are the same, the case is parallel so far as films are concerned. In the case of the drama there is one censor—the Deputy Commissioner of Police. He does not read Bengali. There is a Bengali inspector who does that. I have got to give him a pass. Now that office certainly exacts many passes. Then the Corporation; there is the Theatre inspector of the Corporation; so that most of the Corporation officers obtain passes through the theatre inspector. Then, of course, there is the police; the local thanas and other people. You have got to be in their good graces. Supposing there is a disturbance inside the house you have to ask for police assistance. Now you have got to provide for that and there are other people too.

*Chairman:* You believe the Indian film production has a very good future before it, provided proper steps are taken?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Do you go to the cinema often?

*A.* I used to, but for the last 2 years I don't get the time to go.

*Q.* But you come across cinema goers I suppose?

*A.* Yes, I do.

*Q.* Do you think it has any bad effect on the people.

*A.* It has—that is foreign films in the case of the younger people, it unsettles their minds considerably, this habit of seeing motoring, taxing; it makes them discontented with their environment.

*Q.* Instils in them ideas of extravagance you mean?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Not moral depravation?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* You were a teacher?

*A.* Yes, for 8 years.

*Q.* You think the ideas are extravagantly produced?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* I was referring to any moral degradation.

*A.* In one sense it is moral degradation. If you want to live beyond your means.

*Q.* It is in that sense you mean?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* But that cannot be helped; if you see other people living well you want to live well; and it is an incentive to effort.

*A.* Of course, these are stock arguments but as a matter of fact that is not so. A student comes from the mofussil. His father earns Rs. 60 a month, he lives in a mud hut; he comes here, he lives in a hostel 4 storeys high, he has the benefit of the electric light, he goes and looks at the cinema, he looks at the background, furnished houses, hotel lounges, this and that, scenes of Monte Carlo.

*Q.* So he acquires an aversion for village life?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* But that he gets by seeing Calcutta itself, by seeing the Hotels, Firpo's, etc.?



A. He never goes inside Firpo's.

Q. He looks at the show windows of the houses here,—Whitenway Laidlaw's—and he sees all these things.

A. The cinema brings all this very directly before his eyes. As a matter of fact, the habit of borrowing is growing among students. I was a superintendent in a students' hostel. I was a professor in a first grade college here for 8 years and I have considerable knowledge of the students. I can state very definitely that the habit of borrowing is growing among students.

Q. And you think it is accentuated by going to the cinema?

A. The cinema constitutes one of the causes.

Mr. Neogy: One remedy for this state of things will be the substitution of Indian films for Western films?

A. Indian films, yes.

Chairman: By living in the city and seeing these things there is an aversion created to village life. They don't want to go back to their village life. That is your point?

A. Yes.

Mr. Green: You say in this statement, the producing company with a small capital stands absolutely at the mercy of the exhibitors. Can you tell us what the particular terms are, what the exhibitor draws?

A. About 30 per cent. goes to the producing company; and the exhibitor will take 70 or 66 per cent.

Q. He will do the advertising?

A. Yes.

Q. So it is a net profit of 30 to 35 per cent. of the gross takings.

A. Not net profit. The producing firm gets only about 33 per cent. That is the highest it can get.

Q. 33 per cent. of the gross takings?

A. Yes.

Q. Is that not sufficiently remunerative if the film is shown in enough theatres?

A. It is, but the return will be not more than 15 to 20 per cent., not even so much; and it will take possibly about 3 years to make that profit.

Q. Say he spends Rs. 10,000 on the film.

A. If the film is popular in Calcutta he will get back Rs. 10,000 in 6 months.

Q. On those terms?

A. Yes, if the film is popular.

Q. If you make a bad article you cannot expect to make a profit out of it. But is it not rather a strong statement to say that the small company is absolutely at the mercy of the exhibitor, if he can get back his capital cost in 6 months?

A. The return comes in very quickly for the first 6 months, after that it is very slow.

Q. That is all pure profit.

A. But think of the time over which the profit is distributed. It does not work to more than 6 per cent. It is only people with big concerns who can do it at 6 per cent. This money is, in most cases, borrowed at 15 per cent.

Q. If he can make better films, I take it his return will be quicker?

A. If they are accepted by the exhibitor.

Q. Doesn't it follow that if he puts through a good film it will be accepted by the exhibitor?

A. Well, let me give you one example. This "Incarnation"—an Indian film.

Q. I am referring to Indian films.

A. It was shown at the Albion where very few Indians go. It ought to have been shown in the Northern and Southern quarters, at the Empress Theatre or the Crown Theatre or some other theatre in Burra Bazar, with an Indian name attached to it.

Mr. Neogy: What reason can you suggest for it?

A. I do not exactly understand. It is a peculiar perversity.

Mr. Green: In answer to question 14, you approve of propaganda films if Government will let private firms take such films for them.

A. It will not be run on business lines if the State undertakes production.

Q. Now the Indian producing companies, are they fully occupied with producing commercial films?

A. No, they don't get any orders.

Q. But the ordinary process is to produce the film first and then to market it. Do you think that if they had Government orders they would be content?

A. That would help them to procure capital.

Q. Can you give us any idea at what cost they would produce for Government, the foot rate?

A. If they get Re. 1-8 from the Government it would pay them.

Q. I don't say it is a fact, but supposing we were convinced by evidence that Government could produce those films at Re. 1 per foot?

A. In that case it would be cheaper for the Government to go in for it themselves.

Q. I don't want to ask you to go into details, but if we are satisfied that Government could produce propaganda films at a very much cheaper price than Indian private producers, would you still be opposed to Government doing it?

A. Supposing the Government produces a film at a very cheap cost. Well it means, the difference will be very little. Say 8 annas a foot. If the Government produces 10,000 or 20,000 feet per year, it will mean only Rs. 10,000 or Rs. 20,000 more for the Government.

Q. But do you realise it all comes out of the public pocket, whether it is Rs. 5,000 or Rs. 10,000?

A. If these firms can get the contracts, they can get capital on the strength of that.

Q. You think it will encourage private gentlemen and so on to put money into the trade?

A. That is my idea.

Q. And you think it is legitimate for general revenues to be used admittedly for the purpose of attracting capital to this industry?

A. If this industry thrives it will provide occupation for thousands of people and the Government ought to do it.

Q. Now in answer to No. 17, you say "if Indian films are to succeed and are to have a world market they must be essentially Indian in character". We have been rather exercised about that because an American expert told us that if an Indian film is to have a world market it must not be purely Indian. He said from his knowledge of the American market that a purely Indian film would not interest his people.

A. I don't know but I do not see what interest the American people will have in Americanised versions of Indian stories.

Q. Not necessarily that. They might like to see Indian scenery and Indian people; but that the type of tale must have some interest for his people. He was quite candid. He said the audience in America are usually what he would call "low-brow audiences", not very intellectual, and that subjects like "Incarnation", for example, which are largely philosophical would bore them.

**Q.** What type of Indian subject do you contemplate when you make this remark?

**A.** Historical, romances, stories of modern life.

**Q.** Indian romances?

**A.** Yes, from say the story of Nur Jehan or Asoka. If "Intolerance" succeeded in America, I don't see why these should not succeed.

**Q.** I take it you mean if the technique is good enough.

**A.** But the technique in the West was evolved not in one or two days. It will be evolved here also. What I mean to say is that the acting and the general production should have an Indian character, an Indian stamp about it. At the present moment Indian films produce—supposing it presents a pair of lovers, they behave very much as a European pair would. Now no Indian would make love in the way that is depicted in some of these films.

**Chairman:** If he makes love at all?

**A.** He is not as dry as that.

**Mr. Green:** In answer to question No. 18, you want legislation forcing the exhibition of Indian films up to a certain definite percentage. Is your idea that that should apply to every single theatre in India, exception being made in the case of particular houses which specially cater for European audiences for such time as Indian films do not rise to a particular standard? Could it be possible to make a provision such as has been made in the English Act that two or more houses may combine and that if say one house gave 100 per cent. Indian programme then the other could give 100 per cent. non-Indian programme if it wanted to. In other words, the quota should be transferable?

**A.** That may be done.

**Q.** Your object being—what is your object?

**A.** I would not mind, I would not like to deprive the European element in a town like Calcutta of the pleasure of looking at good films. For example the Picture Palace and the Globe theatre—these two houses may show European films cent. per cent. In one sense that would be very good because you would have a standard.

**Chairman:** And do you realise that the quota system will be of more practical value in a place like Calcutta. Supposing Madans, the two corners South and North of Calcutta, exhibited only Indian films and all their other theatres showed 40 per cent. of the quota—probably they are doing it to-day.

**A.** They are doing it for the last one year, because that is paying them; they will be compelled to do it.

**Mr. Green:** If they are doing it already, is it necessary to legislate?

**Chairman:** That is another matter. The object of the quota is to increase production—exhibition, and, thereby, production?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** So unless it has that effect there is no object in going in for it.

**A.** Still I think there should be some legislation. There are places where they don't show Indian films.

**Q.** You must compel them to show them there?

**Mr. Neogy:** It may be a smaller percentage there and a larger percentage elsewhere?

**A.** Yes.

**Mr. Green:** I want to ask one question only about the effect of films. You told the Chairman and in your written statement you say that certain types of films have a deleterious effect on the minds of young people. On the other hand, later on in 27 (a), you say you cannot shut out Western civilisation for good and ever. I take it you are not frightened of the effect of the Western films on the moral life of young people, of adolescent India?

**A.** No.

*Q.* But you are frightened that it teaches them to be extravagant, to get into debt etc.?

*Chairman:* Get away from plain living . . .

*Mr. Green:* And high thinking?

*A.* I don't know much about high thinking.

*Q.* That is the only effect you fear of Western films?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* And at the same time you admit that the film by itself is not the only thing, it is one of various tendencies leading in that direction?

*A.* But it is a powerful agency.

*Q.* You don't actually suggest that the danger is so great that Western films should be stopped for that reason alone?

*A.* Oh no.

*Colonel Crawford:* I would like to ask you one or two questions about the position of the actor. You suggested for instance that a romance like Nur Jehan might find a market abroad. Mr. Green suggested to you that it would have to be dealt with by the producer in a manner suited to the audience which you wanted to capture. Nur Jehan treated in an Indian manner suited to the desires of Indian audiences would not readily be accepted by an American audience.

*A.* I don't know.

*Mr. Green:* Nur Jehan's face would not be shown according to some gentlemen who have appeared before us. It would be the height of . . .

*A.* That is why I have said the schoolmaster, the religious missionary and the faddist should be banned from the censorship.

*Mr. Neogy:* But you are showing Nur Jehan's face on the stage?

*A.* Certainly. Nur Jehan and almost all the other Mogul princesses.

*Q.* There has been no protest from Mussulmans?

*A.* None. We have done so for the last 20 years—more than that, 50 years.

*Colonel Crawford:* What strikes me is this, that the Indian producer has two different audiences to cater for, his Indian market desiring his pictures produced in a certain manner . . . .

*A.* There is no particular Indian manner of producing a film.

*Q.* Take the portrayal of love. In the Indian way, it is done on an infinitely more modest line than the American producer is accustomed to serve his audience. I was just wondering whether a production on those lines would therefore be popular with American audiences.

*A.* I hope it will be.

*Q.* Or whether you won't have to give the American audience the way in which they are accustomed to.

*A.* You can have lots of dancing, cabaret scenes and so on; but if you throw on the screen some of the Moghul incidents you will have plenty of colour.

*Q.* I quite agree that the spectacular part of your films should be equal to anything that America can produce in the way of spectacles; but when you come down to the human portion of the story, your human emotions will have to be interpreted, it seems to me, in a different light from what you require for Indian audiences.

*A.* The character film might prove an attraction to an American audience.

*Q.* You have no evidence of that?

*A.* No.

*Q.* Except that "The Light of Asia" was considered by the renters too heavy.

**A.** But then who was it produced by? They produced the film in such a way that although it was the story of Buddha's life, they had for a background medieval Jaipur. I don't think much of their ideas of production. They actually had Moghul regalia in procession while depicting the life of Buddha.

**Q.** It was inartistic you think?

**A.** Certainly. It did not appeal even to Indians.

**Q.** You are not satisfied with the standard of acting for films in India?

**A.** It is rather a difficult question to answer. What I mean is this, good actors are not attracted to the trade, because there is no future. The people who really produce films try to enlist the services of amateurs. They try to get as many men as possible without paying them. They don't want to pay for good men.

**Q.** Is there not the money in the business to pay for good actors?

**A.** There is money but they don't want to pay for this simple reason, because it is an Indian film and they know it will answer for an Indian audience, so they don't want to pay.

**Q.** The Indian audience is not demanding good acting at present, they are satisfied with indifferent acting?

**A.** Because they don't get many Indian films; whatever they get they thank themselves for.

**Q.** So far as I can understand from the evidence given before us, cinema acting is more a question of the director than it is of the individual actor—that is, the director tells the actor the type of emotion he desires and the actor displays it.

**A.** As a matter of fact the actor need not know what he is doing sometimes. He is merely a pawn in the hands of the director or producer.

**Q.** Would you favour the importation of a certain number of directors for a period of years?

**A.** What will they do? These films will lose their Indian character. They will not be able to handle Indian stories.

**Q.** But supposing you have an imported director for training purposes.

**A.** I think they pay to the indigenous director just as much as they pay for the imported director, they will get at least a dozen good directors here.

**Q.** You think such Indian directors exist to-day?

**A.** They do exist.

**Q.** You don't think any special training is required?

**A.** Some training would be certainly helpful, some knowledge of Western studios; but I say with emphasis that there are men who are quite capable of producing good films here in India but they are not attracted because the profession is not remunerative.

**Q.** You have been doing some directing?

**A.** Oh yes.

**Q.** Without giving away secrets can you give us an idea of the salary you drew as a director?

**A.** It is no secret. When I was working with Madan they paid me what I considered to be a very poor salary, Rs. 500 and my conveyance, as a director; but that was the first time. I was then teaching. I came to them because I had a love for this business. Then I left them after a year and a half. I started my own theatre. First of all I started a cinema the Taj Mahal but we quarrelled, as we generally do here in Bengal. I gave it up and I started a theatre of my own and certainly I made much more than Rs. 500 a month.

**Q.** Have you had any further offers for you to go back as a director.

**A.** On the stage I am quite sure of employment at Rs. 1,000 or Rs. 1,500 a month. I can draw it quite easily; but so far as films are concerned, where

is the firm who can pay so much? I will have to start my own company. I will do it as soon as I get the necessary capital. I am trying for it.

**Q.** You have already referred to the haphazard manner in which production has gone on particularly in Bengal. Now, what struck me was that a very small part of actors and actresses are employed permanently, more people are taken on on the piece system.

**A.** Almost all the people are taken on the piece system, except three or four.

**Q.** Do you think such a condition can be helpful for the creation of a film acting profession at all?

**A.** Not at all. The piece system cannot answer for this simple reason, because there is only one firm actually producing on a large scale. The rest produce one or two films a year, so that there will be a very small chance of continued employment consequently people don't care to act.

**Mr. Neogy:** It would not be correct to say that these producers have their hands absolutely full, even the big producers?

**A.** No.

**Q.** And if they were assured of government contracts they could certainly employ men on a permanent basis?

**A.** Yes. Capital would be attracted. I think this government contract would help to bring out the capitalist.

**Q.** And find permanent and continuous employment for the artist too, and help to establish a film acting profession, which at present is non-existent?

**A.** At present there is no profession. The profession does not exist.

**Q.** Did they employ any director, the big producing concerns whom you have mentioned, did they employ any expert director permanently?

**A.** To begin with they had three directors, foreign. But they found it didn't pay. I have worked with both of them. I was associated with them both and one was paid a very big salary, Rs. 2,500 or Rs. 3,000 a month with his son practically, they were camera men. They called them directors and producers but it was a misuse of the term.

**Q.** But did they do any direction at all?

**A.** Well, they would sometimes say, "do this and do that".

**Q.** But could they interpret the Indian sentiments?

**A.** No. The productions are there to show.

**Q.** Do you think that it is possible to derive any benefit from being placed under their charge as an apprentice?

**A.** No, none. I don't think there will be any very great benefit in being assistants to the type of men that were brought out. There is a mistaken notion somewhere, I was reading it in the papers, that there are no comic indigenous films. I don't know whether you have seen them.

**Mr. Green:** We have been told of a few.

**A.** There are two or three very good films. Have you seen the films?

**Q.** No, but I have seen one or two comic scenes and I have been struck by the possibilities of the comic in Indian films.

**A.** Oh yes. There is one man, whose face would have been a fortune if he had been born in America.

**Mr. Neogy:** You mean Chittaranjan Goswami? We saw him taking part in a film.

**Mr. Green:** Very good indeed!

**A.** I produced two films with him as the chief comedian. They were both very successful. But he does not get employment.

**Q.** We were told by an American expert that the Indian productions which stood the best chance of getting a market in America were two-reel comics.

**A.** It would not be very difficult to produce two-reel comics of a good type.

*Q.* You don't think there would be any risk of Indians feeling they were being misrepresented?

*A.* No, no. Supposing Indians produced them, why should Indians be misrepresented.

*Chairman:* What is the name of the comic you have in mind?

*A.* One is entitled "Khoka Babu"—the Old Infant. A boy of 18 or 20 posing as a small child. His parents are very fond of him. He is the only child of a rich Bengali and he is always treated as a boy ought to be. The other is "The Bridegroom Market".

*Q.* It must be very popular here but I don't know if they will understand it in England.

*A.* The story is something like this. A man goes out to find a bridegroom for his daughter. There are stalls for bridegrooms, different types of bridegrooms.

*Q.* It is more a criticism of social conventions, isn't it?

*A.* Yes.

*Mr. Neogy:* An idea has been put forward that a combination of foreign and Indian directors might be helpful in the production of certain pieces.

*A.* Well, yes, but the Indian director ought to have the last word in the matter in anything connected with the story.

*Q.* It has also been suggested that the control must be undivided.

*A.* Certainly. If the directors are quarrelling you can't get any work done.

*Mr. Green:* Somebody must have the final word.

*Chairman:* But do you think the association for a time would be helpful, if they go and see how things should be done?

*A.* That would be much better.

*Q.* And you don't require a long stay for that? Six months would be enough?

*A.* Quite enough.

*Q.* And they would be able to see the studios actually at work. Do you think it would be of any great use to bring out experts for training our men?

*A.* They won't train. Expert camera men were brought out but they would not develop in the presence of Indian assistants.

*Q.* So that is your experience at Madans.

*A.* But so far as production is concerned I don't think I had much to learn from them. But they are very good camera men and they made a secret of it and of the formula.

*Q.* They would not show? That is what happened also in the . . . A Frenchwoman was brought in to do the work but she would not show it in the presence of Indians.

*A.* Naturally, it is to her interest to keep the secret. As soon as people learn the work she would be turned out.

*Mr. Neogy:* And the longer it takes for the Indian to learn the better for them?

*A.* I think it is possible to learn this thing in Germany.

*Q.* Now about these government contracts. It was suggested that there might be a difference of 50 per cent. in the rates of production cost. Well, even if that is borne out by experience, would you be prepared to support that as a sort of indirect subsidy for this trade?

*A.* Oh, yes.

*Q.* Then again, would you be prepared to turn out government work on a modest return, more modest than what you would expect from your entertainment pictures?

*A.* Oh yes, certainly.

*Q.* Having regard to the fact that it is sure work and you get a quick return.

*A.* And this government work would help to bring in capital. At the present time if I have to borrow money, I have to take it from the Marwari fiundi-walla at 25 to 60 per cent.

*Q.* Your credit would be enhanced?

*A.* Supposing I got a government contract, I could get money at 7 to 9 per cent.

*Chairman:* It gives you a reputation.

*A.* There is less risk in investing. At least the investor will think so.

*Mr. Green:* It will add to your prestige.

*Mr. Neogy:* The Director of Industries, Mr. Weston, stated that the Taj Mahal Film Co. had at one time approached him for some help and he issued a sort of circular letter in your favour. Of what use was that letter to you?

*A.* No use.

*Q.* He did not keep himself in touch with you later?

*A.* No, you see. I remember I approached him. Dr. Dutta came to see our studio and they promised all sorts of things but when we went to him,—it was the Indian Tea Cess Committee, they wanted to produce a film depicting all the stages of the tea industry,—I didn't get the order.

*Q.* But who got it in the end?

*A.* I don't know. Because immediately after that I left the Taj Mahal. But they didn't get any industrial contract, so far as I know.

*Q.* Have you any experience in censorship here?

*A.* On the stage certainly, and about films to a certain extent.

*Q.* In what way would you like to see the methods of censorship improved?

*A.* Well, for myself as I stated I believe in provincial boards and there is no use for a central board, and the provincial board here in Bengal at least is very much police-ridden. It ought to be more non-official in character. At least there ought to be less of the police element. I would much rather like to see a European member of the I. C. S., or the I. E. S., as chairman rather than the Police Commissioner. As it is the Police Commissioner has ample powers to stop a film if he considers it to be harmful.

*Q.* But you don't want him to be turned out? You want him to be a member? You don't want the office of President to be attached to the Police office?

*A.* And the office should be representative. That is essential.

*Chairman:* In Bombay they have not got any police post.

*Mr. Neogy:* We have just heard a complaint that mythological subjects are sometimes misrepresented.

*A.* Why sometimes? More often than not.

*Q.* Mythological films as they are produced at present are very poor and you yourself have complained that the Indian standards of life have not been correctly represented. What is the remedy? A suggestion has been made that Government might set up a sort of board of advisers on which there should be high-class literary men, scientists, artists and so on, whose advice would be available to the trade.

*A.* Where would the board be located?

*Q.* That is a matter of detail. Where would you like to see it located?

*A.* I would like it to be in Calcutta. But even then I don't think the board would work as effectively as one particular person. I rather think they should spend some of their takings. They take a lot, they spend nothing.

*Chairman:* They should put literary experts on the staff?

*Mr. Neogy:* Can you depend upon the trade to do the necessary thing in this direction?



A. My idea is that if the quota system is introduced and if every house has to exhibit a certain number of Indian films, then naturally every exhibitor would try to get better films.

Q. But the quota system would assure them of a market. Where would the incentive for improvement come from?

A. My idea is that if there are two rival houses.

Q. Oh, you would depend in that case on the natural rivalry of exhibitors.

A. And also the quality of the film. Because there would be an advisory board to see whether this is suitable or not suitable.

Q. For the purpose of satisfying the quota, the board could certify certain pictures as fit for exhibition, and in order to satisfy the quota you must show these pictures only. That would improve the standard. Now, one last point. It has been said that actresses in Bengal and actors too have not got a film face.

A. I don't think there is much in that. What is a film face? A face with a character, that is all.

Mr. Green: We understand that people with small eyes do not make good film faces.

A. I think I have got a very small pair of eyes.

Q. Well I am referring particularly to ladies.

A. No. There will be no want of film faces.

Mr. Neogy: If only people would care to go about and search for them, they would get them?

A. Oh yes. If they pay for the pleasure of looking at a film face.

Q. Do you think that acting on the stage helps people to become actors and actresses for the screen?

A. It does. Most of the film stars were originally on the stage.

Q. You mean foreign stars?

A. Yes. For example Matheson Lang. He is one of the foremost film stars, and certainly he was quite a great actor. I can tell you that most of them, 90 per cent. of them, were stage actors and actresses to begin with.

Q. It has been said that the standard of education of most of the actors and actresses is not sufficiently high to enable them to interpret things correctly. What do you think of that?

A. No, I think at least in Bengal, in my theatre I have got 11 graduates

Q. But film actors?

A. Well for the pleasure of having an educated actor you must pay. At the present moment the actors are not paid well. So they get what they can, anybody from the streets.

Chairman: As you put it, without a knowledge of Bankim Chandra Chatterji's novels a film is produced by people who don't know a word of Bengali.

A. Yes, that is done sometimes. For instance, "Profulla" was produced and the part of Jogesh, the hero, it is really a drama which shows the evil effects of drink, now this man becomes absolutely mad, he takes to hard drinking and becomes a D. T. patient, and this part was entrusted to a Parsi, who didn't understand the part at all and it was not well done.

Q. At the same time, I may tell you that the part of the priest in Tagore's "Sacrifice" was taken by a Parsi.

It was done remarkably well.

Mr. Neogy: But what about actresses? They have not got much education?

A. They have not got much book education but certainly they understand better than men. My experience is that these girls learn much more quickly than these educated men. They have a fund of natural sympathy.









